Relations between English Settlers and Indians in 17th Century New England

Diploma Thesis

Brno 2010

Supervisor: Michael George, M.A.  Written by: Bc. Richard Tetek
Declaration

Hereby I declare that I worked on this thesis on my own and used only the sources listed in the bibliography.

I agree that the thesis be placed in the library of the Faculty of Education of Masaryk University in Brno and made accessible for study purposes.

Prohlašuji, že jsem závěrečnou diplomovou práci vypracoval samostatně, s využitím pouze citovaných literárních pramenů, dalších informací a zdrojů v souladu s Disciplinárním řádem pro studenty Pedagogické fakulty Masarykovy univerzity a se zákonem č. 121/2000 Sb., o právu autorském, o právech souvisejících s právem autorským a o změně některých zákonů (autorský zákon), ve znění pozdějších předpisů.

Brno 10<sup>th</sup> November 2010

Bc. Richard Tetek
Acknowledgement

I would like to thank my supervisor Michael George, M.A. for all his kind help, valuable advice and outstanding support. I would also like to thank him for his patience and friendly approach, which contributed to compiling this thesis.
Contents

Contents.................................................................4

Introduction..........................................................5

1. Native People of Southern New England.................................7
   1.1. Tribes of New England........................................7
   1.2. Languages and Population..................................10
   1.3. Social Structure, Lifestyle and Culture......................12
   1.4. First Contacts................................................18
   1.5. European Perceptions of Native Americans..................22

2. The Pilgrims..........................................................29
   2.1. The Saints and Strangers....................................29
   2.2. Puritanism....................................................30
   2.3. The Pilgrims and Indians....................................32

3. The Great Migration..................................................46
   3.1. The Impact of the Great Migration..........................46
   3.2. Indians of New England and Christianity..................50

4. The Pequot War......................................................55
   4.1. The Causes of the War.......................................55
   4.2. The Mystic Massacre........................................59

5. King Philip’s War....................................................65
   5.1. The Situation Prior to the Conflict........................65
   5.2. The Beginning of the War...................................70
   5.3. The Great Swamp Fight......................................72
   5.4. Philip’s Death................................................75
   5.5. The Aftermath of the War...................................79

Conclusion...........................................................82

Works Cited...........................................................84

List of Appendices....................................................90

Appendices............................................................91
Introduction

The events that took place in New England during the 17th century were of vital importance for the history of the United States of America. It was the initial period of the relations between the Native American and Anglo-Saxon civilization and the outcome of the first decades of mutual contacts shaped and altered the course of history for both cultures.

The roots of American national identity are often traced back to the times of the early settlers who managed to survive in an unknown environment under hard conditions and founded the first major settlements and towns on the North American soil. The myth surrounding the coming of the Pilgrims still persists in American culture and popular history. It is, apart from other things, reflected in the celebration of the first Thanksgiving when the Wampanoag Indians and English settlers from the Plymouth Plantation gathered to celebrate the first harvest and survival the English newcomers.

The image of Indians sitting and feasting at one table with the white colonists might imply that the relations between the two nations were friendly and warm. Indeed, the relatively short period between 1620 when the Plymouth Colony came into existence and the outbreak of the first wars with Native inhabitants is often understood as a period of peace and mutual understanding on the individual and human level. Names like Squanto, Hobbamock or Massasoit would probably sound familiar to most Americans, at least to those who know the basics of American history.

Yet, there are other names like Uncas or Philip. These names are usually connected with conflicts and destruction rather than with peace and friendship. It is evident that the relations between the English settlers and Native Americans were far more complex and dynamic than it looks from the appealing simplification of some movies and publications.

When the Pilgrims came to the shores of New England, they did not enter an empty virgin land. The area had been a homeland to numerous groups of Native Americans with their own thriving societies and history. For thousands of years, these peoples had managed to maintain their unique culture and lifestyle and to make their living without the advantages of European technology.
The arrival of the Europeans meant a drastic change for the Native Americans. Together with diseases which decimated the native population, the English settlers also brought an alien culture and religion and more advanced technology. The worldviews of the English and Native Americans differed significantly and religious bias and mutual misunderstanding made the early contact difficult.

The English considered their culture superior and their attitudes were often aggressive and intolerant. The Native Americans, on the other hand, lacked the military strength and unity of the English and were, to some extent, willing to assimilate some features of European culture into their own. The growing number of English settlers, together with their constant hunger for land, inevitably led to conflicts and to the rapid expansion of the English settlements.

The way in which the English dealt with the Native peoples of New England in the 17th century bore all the hallmarks of the future treatment of the Native Americans elsewhere in the United States. Sadly, something which had originally started as an attempt to find freedom and to build a model society for the whole Christian world resulted in the exploitation and conquest of the indigenous inhabitants of North America.

The aim of this thesis is not to pass judgment on the actions of either the English settlers or the Native Americans. The issue is far too complex to allow a simple impartial conclusion, even though it is clear that the consequences were devastating for the American Indians. Rather than that, the goal of this paper is to put the events into a broader context and to provide a detailed insight into an interesting period of American history which was crucial for the further development of white-Indian relations.
1. Native People of Southern New England

1.1. Tribes of New England

The area of what is now called Southern New England and covers current states of Massachusetts, Connecticut and Rhode Island, had been homeland to various tribes or groups of indigenous people long before the European arrival. The boundaries between the tribes are difficult to define geographically because they often moved due to migration caused by plagues, wars, changes in alliances and other factors. Each tribe usually consisted of many subdivisions with different names but subordinated to the major sachem, who was the principal leader of the whole group (Vaughan, *New England Frontier* 51). Because of the large number of principalities living in the region, only the most significant tribes or the tribes that played an important role in relations with English settlers will be mentioned. There are more possible spelling variations for some tribal names.

The area of present-day Massachusetts was inhabited by the tribe of the same name. The Massachusetts were badly hit by the plague epidemic between 1616 and 1619 which was brought to the region probably by French traders, as well as devastated by wars with the Abenakis (known also as Tarrentine), a warlike tribe of hunters living in the north (Salisbury102-103). Once a powerful tribe, the Massachusetts were almost wiped out at the time of English colonization. From 3,000 warriors in 1614, as reported by John Smith, their numbers dropped to around 500 people in 1631 (Massachusetts Indian Tribe History). Thomas Morton, a controversial Englishman who lived close to them, later described the impact of the epidemic in the area:

...the hand of God fell heavily upon them, with such a mortal stroke that they died on heaps as they lay in their houses; and the living, that were able to shift for themselves, would run away and let them die, and let their carcasses lie above the ground without burial. For in a place where many inhabited, there hath been but one left alive to tell what became of the rest; the living being (as it seems) not able to bury the dead, they were left for crows, kites and vermin to pray upon. And the bones and skulls upon the several places of their
habitations made such a spectacle after my coming into those parts, that, as I travailed in that forest near the Massachussets, it seemed to me a new-found Golgotha. (19-20)

They were among the first people in the region converting to Christianity and several so-called “praying towns” were established in the area of their tribal dominion. John Eliot, one of the most prominent missionaries of New England, worked with the Massachusetts (Simmons, *Spirit of the New England Tribes* 5-16).

Other tribes neighboring the Massachusetts from the north and west were the Penacooks (identical with the Pawtucket), the Nipmuck and the Pocumtucks. These tribes were not strong enough to play a significant role in the region and were often under dominion of other tribes (Vaughan, *New England Frontier* 56).

A far more important nation for the history of New England were the Wampanoags, sometimes also called the Pokanokets after their principal village. They were closely connected with the Nausets who inhabited the area of Cape Cod. The Wampanoags’ territory was the peninsula on the east shore of Narragansett Bay and the adjacent parts including the islands of Marta’s Vineyard and Nantucket. That area was to become the future Plymouth colony and is now a part of Massachusetts State. Although the tribe was also devastated by plague in 1617, it remained an important power within the region of Southern New England and the Wampanoags were said to have 30 villages in 1620, when the Pilgrims came (Wampanoag Indian Tribe History).

Some members of the tribe including Squanto, Hobbamock, Massasoit and Metacom, also known as King Philip, are among the most famous figures concerning the early relations with the English due to their close contacts with the Pilgrims. The Wampanoags played a crucial role in the uprising against the English in 1675, which is known as King Philip’s War after its leader.

Southwest of the Wampanoags lived their traditional rivals, the Narragansetts. This powerful tribe inhabited shores and islands of Narragansett Bay of present-day Rhode Island. They were closely connected with another tribe called the Eastern Niantics, who were sometimes considered their subtribe but often acted independently. The Narragansett did not suffer such big losses as the other tribes during the plague epidemics. They could number as many as 5,000 people and were therefore often seen as a threat by their neighbors as well as by the English.
Two prominent sachems of the tribe, Canonicus and Miantomono, were close friends of Roger Williams, a famous American theologian and founder of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations. The tribe sided with the English during the war with the Pequots, but was later almost exterminated by the English and their allies in King Philip’s War, and their numbers dropped to around 200 survivors who merged with the Eastern Niantics (Simmons, *Spirit of the New England Tribes* 29).

Further west lived probably the most fearsome tribe of the area, the Pequots. Coming from the north, they managed to split the weaker tribe of the Niantics into two halves and gain control over their western subdivision. The Pequots were looked upon as intruders and disliked by both their neighbors and the English. They were nearly destroyed in the conflict with the English and their native allies in 1638 (Vaughan, *New England Frontier* 55-56).

Originally an offshoot of the Pequots, the Mohegans became another important independent tribe, living in present-day Connecticut. Under the leadership of their chief Uncas, the Mohegans became loyal allies of the English and supported them in all conflicts, contributing significantly to the English victories. In return, they partly gained control over the territory of the defeated tribes and became one of the most important and prominent tribes of the area (Simmons, *Spirit of the New England Tribes* 31).

The last tribe influencing significantly the events in southern New England, although not living there, were the Mohawks. Being the most easterly tribe of the Iroquois confederation, they lived around Albany area and were feared by the other tribes because of their frequent raids into New England territories. These ferocious warriors cooperated with New York governor Andros and played an important role in the King Philip’s War (Philbrick 285-286).

---

1 The tribal names used in the thesis do not always reflect how the people called themselves within their own tribes. Some of these names were given to them by other tribes in the past, and can therefore have negative connotations. Pequot, for example means “destroyer” in Algonquian language. Mohawk is translated as “man-eater”. 
1.2. Languages and Population

All the tribes mentioned above except for the Mohawks belonged to the eastern branch of Algonquian family. Their languages were to some extend similar, therefore neighboring tribes could understand each other but the fluency was decreasing the further one travelled away from home. There were four distinct languages spoken within the area of Southern New England, each with several dialects.

The first one was Massachusett language spoken by the Penacooks, the Massachusetts and the Wampanoags, as well as by bands living on Cape Cod, Martha’s Vineyard and Nantucket Island. The second one was Narragansett language spoken by the tribe of the same name and on islands in the Narragansett Bay. The third was Mohegan-Pequot language spoken in eastern Connecticut by the Pequots, the Mohegans, the Niantics and on eastern Long Island. The last one was Quiripi language spoken by tribes living in western Connecticut (Salisbury 19-21).

It is difficult to give the numbers concerning the native population of New England because there is not enough reliable evidence and sources. Therefore, all numbers must be taken as mere estimates and everybody attempting to raise the question of the populations of that time is, according to Salisbury, bound to “enter a statistical wilderness” (22).

Figures differ significantly from author to author and also with the course of time. James Mooney in his influential book published in 1928 suggests 25,000 people in the region of New England in 1600, whereas Salisbury’s estimate in 1982 is between 126,000 to 144,000 people (26). Other figures we get are 120,000 (Faragher 44), 72,000-92,000 (Jennings 29) or 75,000 as suggested by Russell (28). There can be more factors accounting for such a striking discrepancy. They figures were based on different evidence and sources, some sources might have been overlooked or rejected, or simply the particular author worked differently with them.

One good example of how historians can get to different results is the number of people dependent on a warrior, because early accounts usually mentioned only the number of adult males. Therefore, when Gookin gives the estimate of 18,000 warriors in the region of New England prior the English arrival, Salisbury multiplies it by either 7 or 8, assuming from his evidence that this was the number of persons living with one adult male. Thus, he
gets to numbers between 126,000-144,000 (Salisbury 26). Jennings, on the other hand, uses the ratio of three or four people dependent on a warrior and gets numbers 72,000-90,000 (29). Based on the same primary source, two historians got different results, depending on how they worked with the data.

The figures mentioned above describe the native population before the plague epidemic of probably French origin that swept through the region in 1616-1619, reducing the numbers significantly (Salisbury 102-103). Some tribes could lose as much as 90 percent of their people (Jennings 22; Salisbury 25). The nations that probably suffered the most were the Wampanoags and the Massachusetts. Others, like the Narragansetts, were not so badly affected.

This also disrupted the balance of power within the region, because the more numerous groups tried to make the depopulated tribes their subjects and get control over their territory. This fact led to growing tension among the tribes and to frequent conflicts. This intertribal rivalry was later skillfully used by the English and turned to their advantage (Philbrick 49; Simmons, *Spirit of the New England Tribes* 14). It is obvious that it also weakened the position of Native inhabitants at the time English arrival and made it much easier for the English to settle there.

Due to continuous diseases and conflicts, the Indian population kept declining. In 1674 there were said to be between 8,600-10,750 native inhabitants in Southern New England (Jennings 29). Leach’s estimate is a bit higher- around 20,000, which meant about half the number of the English settlers in the region in 1670’s (1). These numbers later dropped even further because of the deadly effect of King Philip’s War in 1675-1676. Evidently, the 17th century was a disastrous time for the Native peoples of New England.

---

2 The term “Indian” is sometimes used in this thesis. I have decided to do so because it is commonly used in scholarly literature, although there might be some rightful objections to this generalizing term. The same may apply to word “tribe”. See also: [http://www.infoplease.com/spot/ahterms.html](http://www.infoplease.com/spot/ahterms.html) and [http://www.allthingscherokee.com/articles_culture_events_070101.html](http://www.allthingscherokee.com/articles_culture_events_070101.html)
1.3. Social Structure, Lifestyle and Culture

Trying to describe the life of Native communities in 17th century New England can be a tricky task. There are two important points that need to be considered. Firstly, as Native people did not have any written accounts until much later, the information we have come primarily from the writings of white people who visited the region or lived close to its inhabitants. Therefore, their information might be unreliable and misleading, either deliberately or unconsciously. The settlers came from different culture and saw the events through the eyes of Europeans of that time. Moreover, the majority of books written on aboriginal peoples of New England in present-day also originate from the pen of white authors, often coming from academic environments, who might not have real and first-hand understanding of Indian habits and rituals. Therefore, the Native point of view is mostly missing.

Secondly, in reality, there is no such a thing as “Indian culture” or “Indian religion”. Each tribe had different rituals and habits, lived in a different area or environment. Therefore, it would be more appropriate to describe the habits of each tribe separately, although it is not always achievable due to the lack of sources. Bearing in mind what was said above, it is, however, possible to say that the tribes of Southern New England had a lot in common and that they shared many things concerning their lifestyle and habits.

They were all mostly depending on agriculture and corn was their staple food, supplemented by hunting and fishing. They also grew other crops including beans, squashes, pumpkins, Jerusalem artichokes or tobacco. Besides their crops, Indians skillfully used natural resources of food and improved their diet by picking various nuts, berries, and plentiful herbs. For costal tribes, the sea was an important source of food too (Russell 76, 79-80; Salisbury 30-32; Wilson 47-48).

All crops were planted, cultivated, cared for and harvested by women with the help of their children. The only exception was tobacco, which was tended by men. All cultivation was done without the benefit of metal tools, ploughs or animals, because Indians did not keep any domestic animals except dogs and hawks prior to the arrival of the Europeans (Simmons, *Spirit of the New England Tribes* 11). Women also looked after children and were responsible for cooking and household, as well as for making mats,
baskets and other things. Vaughan calls native women “the drudgers of Algonquian society” (New England Frontier 49).

Edward Winslow, one of the early English settlers and the author of important accounts, would have probably agreed with Vaughan: “The women live a most slavish life, they carry all their burdens, set and dress their corn, gather it in, seek out for much of their food, beat and make ready the corn to eat, and have all household care lying upon them” (Winslow 33). In contrast, other authors point out that Indian women played an important role in Native society, especially those of higher rank and that they had more power concerning religious and political decisions than English women (Bragdon 2009: 101,105; Brown qtd. in Shoemaker 52).

Men were responsible for hunting, fishing making tools and weapons and, of course, warfare. To their English neighbors they looked lazy: “The men, for most part, live idly; they do nothing but hunt and fish. Their wives set their corn and do all the other work” (Higginson qtd. in Karr 56). Vaughan adds that “when not engaged in war or peaceful labors, the men sat and smoked, played at traditional Algonquian sports, or searched for fish and game...While the Indian women probably had little time for recreation, the men entertained themselves with variety of sports and games”. Among these free-time activities were also a form of football and long gambling session (Vaughan, New England Frontier 49-50). (There is no doubt, that some modern women might remark that not much has changed since that time.) On the other hand, Vaughan points out that when needed, Indian men worked hard and had more energy and stamina than the English had (New England Frontier 45).

The Native peoples of Southern New England lived in tribal confederacies called sachemdoms, after word “sachem”, meaning chief or leader. Each tribe was governed by a chief sachem that had other subordinate sachems or sagamores, who were in charge of smaller units or villages. William Wood, the author of an early account called New England’s Prospect, wrote that: “The country as it is in relation to the Indians is divided, as it were, into shires, every several division being swayed by a several king “(75).

The sachemship was hereditary and women also could become sachems when there was no male heir. Indian chiefs were not the same as European kings. They could become successful leaders only when they had public respect and had to take public opinion in
regard. The elderly of the tribe were held in honor and took part in decision-making. Sachems also received guests, led negotiations with other leaders and allocated or sold land. If the sachem was not able to rule his people to their satisfaction, or treated his people badly, the subjects would leave him and join another leader (Russel 19-20; Bragdon 1996:140-141; Simmons, Spirit of the New England Tribes 12-13). Roger Williams claims that: “The Sachims, although they have an absolute Monarchie over the people: yet they will not conclude of ought that concerns all, either Lawes, or Subsidies, or warres, unto which the People are averse, and by gentle perswasion cannot be brought “(121). Another settler and author Daniel Gookin confirms that.

Their government is generally monarchical, their chief sachem or sagamore's will being their law; but yet the sachem hath some chief men, that he consults with as his special counsellors. Among some of the Indians their government is mixed, partly monarchical, and partly aristocratical; their sagamore doing not any weighty matter without the consent of his great men, or petty sagamores. Their sachems have not their men in such subjection, but that very frequently their men will leave them upon distaste or harsh dealing, and go and live under other sachems that can protect them: so that their principal endeavour to carry it obligingly and lovingly unto their people, lest they should desert them, and thereby their strength, power, and tribute would be diminished. (154)

European settlers later often misunderstood the role of sachems, especially during negotiations over selling Indian land.

There was no law in the European sense, people lived according to customs and traditions, and made sure themselves that the basic social rules were followed. The authority of the chief also played an important role and sachem himself could execute criminals if necessary (Jennings 111). Although there was no written law, crime was relatively rare within Native societies of the region: “yet a man shall never heare of such crimes amongst them of robberies, murthers, adulteries, &c. as among the English” (Williams 121).

Each family or sometimes more families together, lived in a dwelling of various size, made of wooden poles, bark and mats, with a smoke hole at the top. Those dwelling were called “wigwams”. Indians did not live on one spot the whole year; they moved within their tribal territory seasonally, according to their needs for planting, fishing,
hunting or wars. For travelling they also used lighter, portable wigwams. Inside, the Indians had only basic equipment, baskets and cooking utensils, made primarily of clay, bark or wood, or things bought from the Europeans (Simmons, *Spirit of the New England Tribes* 14; Norton 32-33).

Indians wore simple clothes, made of animal skin or other natural materials and often decorated their bodies with various ornaments and jewellery. Specially precious and valued for them was “wampum”- finely crafted shell beads.

Their merchandise are their beads, which are their money. Of these there are two sorts, blue beads and white beads. The first is their gold, the last their silver. These they work out of certain shells so cunningly that neither Jew nor devil can counterfeit. They drill them and string them, and make many curious works with them to adorn the persons of their sagamores and principal men and young women as belts, girdles, tablets, borders for their women’s hair, bracelets, necklaces, and links to hang in their years. (Josselyn qtd. in Karr 102)

Their clothes and hairstyle reflected their social status and had symbolic significance. Moreover, they painted and greased their bodies, either because of various rituals or because of protection against weather or insect (Bragdon 1996: 170-172; Vaughan, *New England Frontier* 48).

The Native inhabitants of Southern New England were by no means nomadic people, nor were they forest hunters, although some white observers though so- they lived in villages, which were revisited around the year. They did make permanent sites; some tribes even had some kind of forts to protect them in case of wars (Russell 51).

Armed conflicts were common among all tribes, each having their traditional enemies and allies. These relations, as well as boundaries dividing sachemdoms, were fluid and changed in the course of time. Diseases, and later European expansion, unsettled the whole region and rewrote the map of New England.

Unlike European wars, conflicts among Indians prior to the European arrival were less bloody and had more symbolic significance. There were generally fewer casualties and neither women nor children were killed. The concept of “total war” was unknown to them. The purpose of their wars was to gain control over territory or obtain new space for
farming or hunting, not to eliminate or exterminate other communities and destroy their crops and property. They did not fight in closed, organized formation like the Europeans. War was also a chance for warriors to show their bravery and earn respect within the community (Jennings 150-152; Salisbury 229; Russell 188-189; Nash 238-239; Wilson 55). When Roger Williams described their warfare, he used these words:

> Their Warres are farre lesse bloudy, and devouring then the cruel Warres of Europe; and seldom twenty slain in a pitch field, partly because when they fight in a wood every Tree is a Bucklar. When they fight in a plaine, they fight with leaping and dancing, that seldom, an Arrow hits, and when a man is wounded, unless he that shot followes upon the wounded, they soone retire and save the wounded: and yet having no Swords nor Guns, all that are slain are commonly slain with great valour and Courage: for the Conquerour ventures into the thickest, and brings away the Head of his Enemy. (151-152)

Those captured in wars could be put to death, tortured or adopted by the victorious tribe, depending on circumstances and tribal habits. Scalps or heads of the enemies were sometimes brought back as trophies. Unlike Iroquois tribes in the northwest, the Native inhabitants of Southern New England most likely did not practice ritual cannibalism (Jennings 160-161, 166).

Wars, like other significant events, were accompanied by rituals, which played an important role in Indian life and decision-making. Ceremonies were held at the time of harvest, marked transition to adulthood or marriage and took place when somebody died. Other rituals were performed when there was some kind of crisis; famine, drought or epidemic. These rituals often took a form of a feast and dancing or chanting (Simmons, *Spirit of the New England Tribes* 45).

Indigenous people of New England generally believed in a Creator, who had various names, the most known are probably Narragansett term “Cautantowwit” and Wampanoag/ Niantic “Kiehtan”, who resided in the southwest. This deity or god was often connected with afterworld and did not communicate directly with people. Independent on the Creator, there were many other powers or spirits, which were called “manitos” or “manitou”. They were manifestations of divine powers, appearing especially in many things of unusual significance- certain animals, the sun, moon, stars, sacred places or abstract things like colours, winds, water, sky and cardinal directions. It was a “vital force
in all things” and could serve as a mediator between people and supernatural powers (Bragdon 1996: 184-185; Simmons, Spirit of the New England Tribes 38).

Among other valued deities were “Hobbamock” or “Cheepi”, a spirit connected with the souls of the dead, which was both feared and desired for its power. It appeared to humans in visions and dreams, which were an important source of knowledge for Indians. People of unusual spiritual power called a “pniese” or “powwow”, were Native spiritual leaders and were particularly skilled in communication with these deities. They often cured other people and advised sachems when necessary (Simmons, Spirit of the New England Tribes 39).

Indians were not monotheists and they did not have such concepts as heaven or hell or resurrection of the soul. English settlers were not always able to understand Indian traditions and rituals in its full complexity, and often tried to find and exaggerate presumed parallels with Christianity, comparing wrongly Cautantowwit to Christian God and Hobbamock to the devil. Powwows therefore became agents of Satan (Simmons, Spirit of the New England Tribes 44; Simmons, “Cultural Bias” 7; Vaughan, New England Frontier 36; Salisbury 37).

The observations and conclusion of early settlers concerning Native beliefs could differ a great deal. In Mourt's Relation, written between 1620-21 probably by Winslow, there is a statement that: “They (the Indians) are a people without any religion or knowledge of any God” (83). In his other book, written a few years later, he says:

And first, whereas myself and others, in former letters (which came to the press against my will and knowledge) wrote, that the Indians about us are a people without any religion, or knowledge of any God, therein I erred, though we could then gather no better: For as they conceive of many divine powers, so of one whom they call Kiehtan, to be the principal and maker of all the rest, and to be made by none. (Winslow 30)

He even describes human sacrifices taking place, which was most likely untrue: “Many sacrifices the Indians use, and in some cases kill children. It seemeth they are various in their religious worship in a little distance, and grow more and more cold in their worship to Kiehtan; saying in their memory he was much more called upon” (Winslow 32).
Roger Williams, perhaps the most observant English specialist in Native habits of that time, wrote: “If they receive any good in hunting, fishing, Harvest, &c. they acknowledge God in it. Yea, if it be just ordinary accident, a fall &c. they will say God was angry and did it. But herein is their Misery. They branch their Godhead into many Gods. Secondly, attribute it to Creatures” (109). Native culture and the way it was understand by the Europeans, who were predominantly devout Christians and religion was an important part of their lives, had a crucial role in the shaping of Indian-white relations.

1.4. First Contacts

The shores of New England were often visited by European explorers, fishermen and traders long before more significant and stable settlements were established there in the middle of 17th century. These early encounters formed the initial impression on both sides. Therefore, they had a direct impact on future relations.

When it comes to exploring and settling in North America, the English were a bit behind other European superpowers, the Spanish and the French in particular, the later becoming their future rival in New England, together with the Dutch.

The first important and well-documented journey to the region was lead by an Italian explorer in French service Giovanni da Verrazano in 1524, who also visited Rhode Island where he met the Narragansetts people. He describes the encounter, noticing even such interesting details like the size of body parts:

This is the finest looking tribe, and the handsomest in their costumes, that we found in our voyage. They exceed us in size, and they are of a very fair complexion; some of them incline more to a white and others to a tawny color. Their faces are sharp, their hair long and black, upon the adorning of which they bestow great pains; their eyes are black and sharp, their expressions mild and pleasant greatly resembling the antique. I say nothing to your Majesty of the other parts of the body, which are all in good proportion, and such as belong to well-formed men. Their women are of the same form and beauty, very graceful,
of fine countenance, and of pleasing appearance and manners and modesty. ...They are very generous, giving away whatever they have. We formed a great friendship with them, and one day we entered into the port with our ship, having before rode at the distance of a league from the shore, as the weather was adverse. (Verrazano qtd. in Karr 19-20)

The first important English explorer was Bartholomew Gosnold, who visited Cape Cod and Martha’s Vineyard area in 1602. Local Indians showed huge interest in Europeans goods and traded some for skins. As John Brereton, the chronicler of the expedition remarked, “they misliked nothing but our mustard, whereat they made many a sour face” (Brereton qtd. in Vaughan, New England Frontier 6).

Unfortunately, first violent accidents took place during the encounter, after the English built a small fort on the island of Cuttyhunk. Probably due to mutual misunderstanding during trading, some English people were later attacked by the Native inhabitants, after which Gosnold expedition headed back to England, where he praised the possibilities of trade in New England. Brereton later wrote A Briefe and true Relation, which was the first written English account about New England (Philbrick 50-51; Salisbury 88; Vaughan, New England Frontier 7).

Next two expeditions led by Martin Pring in 1603 and George Waymouth in 1605 further worsen the image of the English among the Native inhabitants. Pring had to leave after incidents with Indians, in which his short-lived encampment on the shore was almost destroyed, and Waymouth decided to kidnap five Indians in an ambush, after suspecting a conspiracy against his crew.

Although Waymouth later claimed that he had kidnapped the Indians for his protection, James Rosier, a member of his crew who later described the voyage, also admitted that the captain had had his plans with the captives: “For he being young (Indian), of a ready capacity, and one we most desired to bring with us into England, had received exceeding kind usage at our hands, and was therefore much delighted in our company. When our captain was come, we consulted how to catch the other three at shore” (Rosier qtd. in Karr).

The plan was to capture some Indians who would later work as translators and who would be of assistance to English settlers in the future. Moreover, they could be used as
propaganda agents back in England, where they would describe the wealth of the new
continent. As Ferdinando Gorges, the key figure of the Plymouth Company which
sponsored most voyages and later settlers going to New England, later said: “This accident
[kidnapping the Indians] must be acknowledged the means under God of putting on foot
and giving life to all our plantations” (Gorges qtd. in Vaughan, *New England Frontier* 10).
Some of these Indians were later sent back to America, where they often took the first
opportunity to escape and reunite with their tribes, describing the English to their people

Another expedition in 1606 led by George Popham and Raleigh Gilbert, attempted
to establish a colony in present-day Maine, which was later called Sagadahoc colony. This
attempt failed mostly due to severe conditions and deteriorating relations with local
Abenaki Indians. In an outbreak of violence about ten Englishmen were killed.

Kidnapping continued with Harlow in 1611, who captured other five Indians and
killed more in the process. One of the captured Indians was Epenow, a sachem at Martha’s
Vineyard. Epenow later pretended to be cooperative, and tried to persuade Gorges about
the existence of gold mines in New England. Consequently, he was sent back to find the
mines with another expedition under Nicholas Hobson in 1614. When they came close to
the shores of Martha’s Vineyard, Epenow jumped overboard and escaped with the help of
his people, who were shooting at the crew from cover. No mines were found and the
expedition went back to England (Salisbury 94-96; Philbrick 51).

In 1614 a fleet of ships under the command of famous Captain John Smith explored
the coast of New England, mapping the area and trading with Indians. It was him who gave
the region the name “New England”. Smith found the area a perfect place for future
plantation: “Who can but approoue this a most excel lent place, both for health & fertility?
And of all the foure parts of the world that I haue yet seene not inhabited, could I haue but
meanes to transport a Colonie, I would rather liue here then any where: and if it did not
maintaine it selfe, were wee but once indifferently well fitted, let us starue” (16).

Although Smith himself had only some minor incidents with the Indians of the
region and probably did not kill any of them, Thomas Hunt, one of his captains who was
left behind to do more fishing, decided to catch some Indians along with the fish. He
kidnapped twenty-seven natives at the area of future Plymouth colony and sold them in
Spain as slaves. Among these Indians was Tisquantum, later called Squanto, who would later become a friend of the Pilgrims.

Smith was angry with Hunt, because his harsh treatment of Indians was spoiling his plans for the future plantation: “Notwithstanding after my departure, he abused the Saluages where he came, and betrayed twenty seven of these poor innocent souls, which he sold in Spain for slaves, to move their hate against our Nation, as well as to cause my proceedings to be so much the more difficult” (Smith 31). Even though some Smith’s remarks might imply a friendly attitude towards Native Americans, he was more interested in his own good, and he did not considered them equal to Europeans. He reveals his plans for future America and its Native inhabitants:

If he have but the taste of virtue, and magnanimity, what to such a mind can be more pleasant, then planting and building a foundation for his Posterity, got from the rude earth, by God’s blessing & his own industry, without prejudice to any? If he haue any graine of faith or zeal in Religion, what can he do less hurtfull to any; or more agreeable to God, then to seeke to convert those poor Saluages to know Christ, and humanitie, whose labors with discretion will triple requite thy charge and pains? What so truly sutes with honour and honestie, as the discovering things unknown? erecting Townes, peopling Countries, informing the ignorant, reforming things vnjust, teaching virtue; & gaine to our Nation mother-countrie a kingdom to attend her; finde employment for those that are idle, because they know not what to doe... (Smith 25)

In 1619 another ship under Captain Thomas Dermer sailed to Cape Cod area. On board was Squanto, who got away from Spain and after many adventures lived in London. When they arrived in Squanto’s home village Patuxet, the future site of Plymouth Plantation, they discovered that the people were dead because of the plague and the village was empty. Squanto helped Dermer to negotiate with the Native inhabitants of the area, and was later left there to find surviving members of his tribe and to help the English to befriend the local tribes.

Dermer visited other places within the region and tried to establish friendly relations with the Indians. His effort was marred by another unspecified English ship, whose crew killed some Indians after inviting them on board. Since then, the Native people of the region became very hostile toward Europeans and towards the English in particular.
Dermer himself was seriously wounded in incidents with Indians and later died in Virginia (Philbrick 53; Salisbury 108).

To sum up, eventually all reported Anglo-Indian encounters between 1602 and 1619 ended up in violent incidents with casualties on both sides. At least 37 Indians were kidnapped, although some of them managed to return to their tribes. Undoubtedly, the English must have earned the reputation of dangerous and unpredictable people among the Native inhabitants of New England. This certainly was not a good start for mutual relations in the future.

1.5. European Perceptions of Native Americans

When the first English colonists started to settle in the region of New England in 17th century, they brought with them certain expectations and preconceptions concerning the indigenous people of America in general. Their image of Native Americans was shaped by the accounts and writings of the first explorers, which often reflected the cultural bias of that time. The descriptions of Native inhabitants could differ significantly, according to the goals of the author.

Those who wanted to present their new discoveries of the marvels of the new continent or those who wished to attract new settlers, traders or investors, generally tended to depict Indians in a more sympathetic way. Moreover, “it was only a friendly Indian who could be a trading Indian” (Nash 38). By contrast, those whose aim was to dominate or eliminate Native populations or to justify their enslavement or exploitation often tended to use more negative and hostile images of Indians (Jennings 47).

When Columbus first met the people of Caribbean region, he described them as follows:

They are so guileless and so generous with all they posses, that no one would believe it who has not seen it. They refuse nothing that they posses, if it be asked of them; on the contrary, they invite any one to share it and display as much love as if they would give their hearts...
they are of a very acute intelligence and they are men who navigate all those seas, so that it is amazing how good account they give of everything... (Columbus qtd. in Berkhofer 6-7)

On the other hand, despite his sympathetic descriptions of Native peoples, even Columbus was quick to mention that profit can be made in that part of the world and that “from here in the name of the Blessed Trinity we can send all the slaves that can be sold” (Columbus in Wilson 34).

The early European image of the indigenous peoples of America was largely influenced by Spanish conquistadors, who needed to describe the Native inhabitants as inferior, uncivilized, cultureless and cruel, in order to justify their harsh treatment and enslavement of Indians (Berkhofer 10). This concept of ranking cultures as “superior” and “inferior” or “civilized” and “uncivilized” was often employed to justify violence and is “almost always an exercise of expansionist societies attempting to subjugate other people” (Nash 24).

Therefore, Juan Ginés de Sepúlveda, a defender of Spanish conquest and enslavement of Indians, offers a different picture of Indians than Columbus:

Now compare their [the Spanish] gifts of prudence, talent, magnanimity, temperance, humanity, and religion with those little men in whom you will scarcely find traces of humanity; who not only lack culture but do not even know how to write,...what can you expect from men who were involved in every kind of intemperance and wicked lust and who used to eat human flesh? (Sepúlveda qtd. in Berkhofer 12).

The opinion that Indians are only “natural slaves” was not shared by all Europeans of that time, however. Bartolomé de las Casas, a Spanish Dominican priest, strongly criticized the way in which the Spanish treated the Native peoples of America. His aim was to convert them to Christianity. In 1537, Pope Paul III declared in his papal bull called Sublimus Dei that:

The enemy of the human race, who opposes all good deeds in order to bring men to destruction, beholding and envying this, invented a means never before heard of, by which he might hinder the preaching of God's word of Salvation to the people: he inspired
his satellites who, to please him, have not hesitated to publish abroad that the Indians of the
West and the South, and other people of whom We have recent knowledge should be
treated as dumb brutes created for our service, pretending that they are incapable of
receiving the Catholic Faith.

We, who, though unworthy, exercise on earth the power of our Lord and seek with
all our might to bring those sheep of His flock who are outside into the fold committed to
our charge, consider, however, that the Indians are truly men and that they are not only
capable of understanding the Catholic Faith but, according to our information, they desire
exceedingly to receive it. Desiring to provide ample remedy for these evils, We define and
declare by these Our letters, or by any translation thereof signed by any notary public and
sealed with the seal of any ecclesiastical dignitary, to which the same credit shall be given
as to the originals, that, notwithstanding whatever may have been or may be said to the
contrary, the said Indians and all other people who may later be discovered by Christians,
are by no means to be deprived of their liberty or the possession of their property, even
though they be outside the faith of Jesus Christ; and that they may and should, freely and
legitimately, enjoy their liberty and the possession of their property; nor should they be in
any way enslaved; should the contrary happen, it shall be null and have no effect (Sublimus
Dei).

Sadly, those words had only a limited effect on the real life of Indians and their
suffering continued even after their enslavement was officially condemned by the pope.

As Berkhofer claims, European descriptions of Native Americans often shared
some similar features: “(1) generalization from one tribe’s society and culture to all
Indians, (2) conceiving of Indians in terms of their deficiencies according to White ideals
rather than in terms of their own various cultures, and (3) using moral evaluation as
description of Indians” (25). Although later the accounts often deal with particular tribes,
and Europeans were surely well aware of the differences, the tendency to generalize was
still enduring (Berkhofer 25-26).

Thus stereotypes introduced by the Spanish were later repeated in the writings of
early English explorers and settlers. A large part of misconceptions “was caused by the
inability of ethnocentric minds to transcend their own cultures” (Jennings 48). Native
Americans were described as savage, cruel, barbarous and wild people. They were often
accused of cannibalism and sacrificing their children. This was often due to
misunderstanding Indian puberty ceremonies and other rituals (Jennings 47; Cave 14).
The Puritans settling in New England watched closely what was happening in Virginia at the beginning of 17th century and learnt from the experience of the settlers in Jamestown. Although the Virginia Bay Company backing the whole project advised the Jamestown colonist to have friendly relations with the natives, the situation was tense from the very beginning and the number of incidents between the English and local Powhatan Indians was growing. Captain John Smith, one of the leaders of Virginia Colony, had his way how to subdue “the wild salvages”. His advice was to be absolutely self-confident and to have “the ability to employ the proper combination of deception, intimidation, and brute force” (Salisbury 99).

If necessary, Smith suggested that English colonists should use power and violence to obtain what they wanted from Indians. When describing the possibility of settling in various parts of New England he wrote:

All sorts of cattell may here be bred and fed in the Iles, or Peninsulaes, securely for nothing. In the Interim till they encrease if need be (observing the seasons) I durst undertake to haue corne enough from the Saluages for 300 men, for a few trifles; and if they should bee untoward (as it is most certaine they are) thirty or forty good men will be sufficient to bring them all in subiection, and make this prouision; if they understand what they doe: 200 whereof may nine monethes in the yeare be imployed in making marchandable fish, till the rest prouide other necessaries, fit to furnish us with other commodities (Smith 30).

Physically, Native peoples of New England were usually described as being tawny or dark olive, tall and well formed, lean and handsome. They had dark eyes and hair, and they often painted their faces with various colours. Until later, Native Americans were not connected with the red colour and their pigmentation did not play an important role in the way they were perceived by Europeans (Karr 42-44; Vaughan, “From White Men to Redskin” 3). Some colonists even thought that Indians were born white and became darker only later because of the environment: “Their swarthisness is the suns livery, for they are born fair” (Wood 83). Roger Williams also believed that they were born white and were darkened by the sun (60).

More ambivalent was the image of Indian character as perceived by the colonists. On one hand, Native Americans were often described as generous, hospitable, receptive and intelligent (Nash 37; Vaughan, New England Frontier 43-44). On the other had,
however, they were considered to be idle, treacherous, brutal, hostile, vengeful, malicious and cruel (Cave 14; Nash 38-41). Surely, when it comes to Indian cruelty, some of it was true by today’s standards, but as Vaughan points out “the English were addicted to a similar butchering” and adds that “the seventeenth century had its share of barbarity on both sides of the Atlantic” (Vaughan, *New England Frontier* 41).

From many account it is clear that Europeans tended to be rather suspicious about Indians. For example Samuel de Champlain, a French explorer who visited the Cape Cod area wrote in 1605 that: “It is necessary to be on one’s guard against this people, and live in a state of distrust of them, yet without letting them perceive it” (Samuel de Champlain qtd. in Karr 52). Other descriptions completely contradicted each other:

> They are very bloody minded and full of treachery amongst themselves. One will kill another for their wives, and he that hath the most wives is the bravest fellow. Therefore I would wish no man to trust them, whatever they say or do, but always to keep a strict hand over them...(Levett qtd. in Karr 52)

> Such is their love to one another that they cannot endure to see their countrymen wronged, but will stand stiffly in their defense, plead strongly in their behalf, and justify one another’s integrities in any warrantable action. If it were possible to recount the courtesies, they have showed the English since their first in those parts, it would not only steady belief that they are loving people, but also win the love of those that never saw them...(Wood 88)

Probably, individual traits were applied to the whole group or nation. Like all humans, Native Americans should be judged as individuals and there is not doubt that some of them could fit the European description, while the others could have been different.

From the above example, it is clear that the image of Native Americans was not consistent and depended very much on the attitudes and worldviews of the person describing them. Thomas Morton, an unorthodox settler who had conflicts with the neighboring Puritans, had praised the lifestyle and behavior of the Indians when comparing them with Christians: “But I have found the Massachusetts Indians more full of humanity than the Christians, and have had much better quarter with them...The more Salvages, the better quarter; the more Christians, the worser quarter, I found, as well the indifferent-minded planters can testify” (Morton 113).
Morton’s concept of the Indian was close to what would be later called “noble savage”, in which the Indian was romantically described as a man living in a simple way close to nature, free and unspoiled by the corrupt, materialistic society: “According to human reason, guided only by the light of nature, these people lead the more happy and freer life, being void of care, which torments so many minds of so many Christians: they are not delighted in baubles, but in useful things” (Morton 50).

Nevertheless, even Morton agreed completely with his fellow countrymen when it came to the religion of Native Americans. Christians in general and Puritans especially, condemned and abhorred Native religious practices and beliefs. No matter how sympathetic the author was, all Native Americans were indiscriminately described as devil worshipers and Satanists. Indian belief in direct communication with their deities, dream visions, chanting and various rituals were seen as witchcraft and blasphemy. Indian shamans and powwows in particular were blamed for being directly worshipping the devil (Simmons, “Cultural Bias” 2-5; Vaughan, *New England Frontier* 35; Jennings 47; Pearce 6).

These practices were unacceptable for Christian worldview. When Roger Williams witnessed an Indian powwow working he remarked: “After once being in their Houses, and beholding what their Worship was, I durst never be an eyewitnesse, Spectatour, or looker on, least I should have been partaker of Sathans Inventions and Worships” (112).

For English Puritans religion was probably the most insurmountable barrier between the two cultures. There was no space for compromise and toleration and inevitably Native Americans stood on “the dark side”. Consequently, Puritans perceived Native Americans “as an inverted expression of their cultural ideal” (Simmons, “Cultural Bias” 4). Also, as Jennings points out, for Puritans “religion became much more than a set of doctrines and rituals; it was immanent in the total behavior of its adherents. When a religion was bad, its people were necessarily also bad. It did not matter that they had never done wrong to the Christian contemplating them; they were enemies to God. They were therefore also enemies to God’s people” (43). Thus religion and cultural differences had crucial implications for the Puritan’s attitude towards Indians and it had a direct impact on other aspects of mutual interaction, from everyday contacts to land tenure. “For the
Pilgrims as for the Puritans, religion and empire, Christianization and civilization, divine order and natural order, were known to be one” (Pearce 4).

When William Bradford, the future governor of the Plymouth colony, recalled what the Pilgrims had anticipated while considering the possibility of settling in New England he wrote:

The place they had thoughts on was some of those vast and unpeopled countries of America, which are fruitful and fit for habitations, being devoid of all civil inhabitants, where there are only savage and brutish men which range up and down, little otherwise than the wild beasts of the same…

The change of air, diet and drinking of water would infect their bodies with sore sicknesses and grievous diseases. And also those which should escape or overcome these difficulties should yet be in continual danger of the savage people, who are cruel, barbarous and most treacherous, being most furious in their rage and merciless where they overcome; not being content only to kill and take away life, but delight to torment men in the most bloody manner that may be; flaying some alive with the shells of fishes, cutting off the members and joints of others by piecemeal and broiling on the coals, eat the collops of their flesh in their sight whilst they live, with other cruelties horrible to be related.

And surely it could not be thought but the very hearing of these things could not but move the very bowels of men to grate within them and make the weak to quake and tremble. (Bradford 26-27).

The English image of the Indian was not a static concept. It was undergoing a continual change according to the state of mutual relations and it reflected the development of the English perceptions of Native Americans in the course of time. Sadly, the conflicts which took place in 17th century caused that the English attitudes towards the Native inhabitants became generally even more hostile and negative. “The image of the Indian as a savage beast was therefore a way of predicting the future, preparing for it, and justifying what one would do, even before one caused it to happen” (Nash 39).
2. The Pilgrims

2.1. The Saints and Strangers

In 1620 a group of 102 English settlers crossed the Atlantic to find a space for their settlement in America. On board their ship called *Mayflower* was a mixture of orthodox Separatists and other unorthodox settlers hired by the investors of the enterprise. These people later became to be known as the Saints and Strangers or as the Pilgrims or Pilgrim Fathers. The Saints were religious dissenters and members of a congregation seeking a place to practice their religion unmolested by the official church and government, the Strangers’ motives were more economic than religious. Although only a part of the passengers were the Saints, they were responsible for the policy and leadership of the whole group. Most of them were families, sometimes with children and servants, they were mostly artisans, and they were generally older than those who had come to Virginia. Their goal was to settle in America permanently (Salisbury 111; Wilson 78; Hawke 2).

The events connected with this group and the future Plymouth Colony have become an important part of American history and identity. The Pilgrims are often seen as “the true spiritual founders of America” who “represent the real beginnings of the American nation” (Wilson 77-78). In spite of the fact that the Plymouth Colony was established thirteen years later than Jamestown in Virginia, it was the former not the latter that has been chosen as a national symbol.

Firstly, Jamestown settlers did not embody the required qualities- they were mostly men perusing their own interests, “a rowdy crowd” interested mostly in personal profit. The Pilgrims, by contrast, could be seen as better candidates to set an example for the future generations. They motives were considered to be loftier and more spiritual, and they were thought to embody the ideals of industriousness, independence and self-reliance.

Secondly, the colonists in New Plymouth have been often seen as fair and friendly regarding their dealings with Native Americans, whereas the same could be hardly said about settlers in Virginia, where the relations with the local Indians were much worse from the outset. Therefore, the initial years of Plymouth Colony are often given as an example of
“cordial relations” and amity between English settlers and Native Americans. These images of “sincere friendship” were further amplified by the image of the joint celebration of the first Thanksgiving (Deetz 11; Vaughan 65). To what extend this image corresponded with the reality is, however, questionable.

2.2. Puritanism

The Separatists\(^1\), to whom the Saints belonged, were a part of a larger religious movement generally known as Puritanism. Puritans were English Protestants and followers of John Calvin, who wanted to “purify” and reform the English church. They required return to a simpler church without pompous services and ceremonies. They also required different church hierarchy without bishops, archbishops and cardinals. Puritans relied on the authority of the Bible and their main goal was to seek salvation, although according to them all people were naturally sinners and could be never sure to be saved. Religion played a crucial role in their lives. They devoted themselves to studying the Bible, prayers and to diligent work to defeat evil both within and without (Morgan 7-8; Norton 28-29).

Puritans attempted a more individual and direct relationship with God, yet at the same time, they frowned upon individualistic tendencies in all other areas. For them, individualism meant anarchy and was a direct threat to their concept of community working for the same goals and bound by the same faith and obligations. People should not play or waste time on unimportant matters. Rather, their duty was to work hard to deserve salvation and to serve God. They were organized in congregations where they could help each other to avoid sin by watching closely one another’s behavior. They thought that they were God’s chosen people, who were responsible not only for themselves, but also for all those around them.

\(^1\) To find more details about the differences between the Separatists or Pilgrims and the Puritans see [http://www.pilgrimhall.org/PSNoteNewPilgrimPuritan.htm](http://www.pilgrimhall.org/PSNoteNewPilgrimPuritan.htm)
Their aim was to create a “Christian utopia”, an uncorrupt society working in accordance with divine plans and following the Bible. The individual rights and needs had to be suppressed in order to achieve higher goals. Uniformity rather than diversity was sought. To achieve their goals Puritans employed authoritarian practices and they did not tolerate those who were unorthodox in their religious opinions. Those who were different might have been forced to obey, or they were expelled or dominated. (Nash 69-71; Leach 7-9; Miller 59-60).

Puritanism also reflected the social and economic changes of 16th and 17th century. English society was becoming more industrial and the population was growing. For many people this transformation meant the loss of economic and social stability which used to be based on agriculture and they were forced to find a new form of earning their living. Puritanism managed to give a spiritual underpinning to economic activities, because they believed that they were “called” or elected to do a certain profession by God. Therefore, Puritans were often successful merchants, artisans and entrepreneurs responsible for economic growth. Together with becoming more powerful and influential, they were also becoming more dangerous for any non-puritans in power. Consequently, this led to their persecution during the reign of James I and Charles I. Hunger for land, overpopulation and spiritual alienation were among the main causes of migration to America. Colonization thus provided solution for both religious and material problems. (Faragher 43-44; Salisbury 170-171).

Puritans also believed in divine intervention and all events had religious significance for them. They explained many things as a sign of God’s mercy or wrath upon them. Therefore, the epidemic which had almost wiped out the tribes in the area of their future settlements was seen as divine providence, and assured them that it was a God’s plan for them to settle in America. Daniel Gookin later wrote that “divine providence made way for the quiet and peaceable settlement of the English in those nations” (148). By the same token, all help provided by local Indians was seen as a favour from God. When Edward Winslow, one of the well-known Pilgrims, later described the beginnings of their settlement he wrote:
…you may behold the good providence of God working with you in our preservation from so many dangerous plots and treacheries, as have been intended against us; as also in giving his blessing so powerfully upon the weak means we had, enabling us with health and ability beyond expectation, in our greatest scarcities, and possessing the hearts of the savages with astonishment and fear of us, whereas if God had let them loose, they might easily have swallowed us up, scarce being an handful in comparison of those forces they might have gathered together against us, which now by God’s blessing will be more hard and difficult…(2)

On the contrary, any conflicts between the Puritans and Native Americans showed that there was something wrong because God is angry with His chosen people (Salisbury 176; Simmons, *Spirit of the New England Tribes* 37).

For Puritans the world was a place of constant struggle between the powers of good and evil, between God and Satan. As Nash declares, “for Puritans life itself was a militant campaign against the Devil” (67). Of course, it was the Puritans who represented the forces of light and it was their divine right and obligation to destroy those serving Satan (Simmons, “Cultural Bias” 2).

### 2.3. The Pilgrims and Indians

When the Pilgrims reached the shores of New England in November 1620, they found themselves in an uneasy situation. They landed in a territory not covered by the patent they had, some of them were ill, and because they arrived much later than they had hoped, their provisions were running low, whereas winter was coming near. Their first stop was at a sandy peninsula known as Cape Cod. After they anchored there, they decided to explore the surroundings and find a suitable place for their settlement (Bradford 83; Philbrick 36).

When William Bradford, the author of the most detailed journal of the Pilgrims and the future governor of the colony later described their landing, it was clear that their expectations about the place were far from optimistic:
It is recorded in Scripture as a mercy to the Apostle and his shipwrecked company, that the barbarians showed them no small kindness in refreshing them, but these savage barbarians, when they met with them (as after will appear) were readier to fill their sides full of arrows than otherwise. And for the season it was winter, and they know that the winters of that country know them to be sharp and violent, and subject to cruel and fierce storms, dangerous to travel to known places, much more to search an unknown coast. Besides, what could they see but a hideous and desolate wilderness, full of wild beasts and wild men—and what multitudes there might be of them they knew not. (70)

The area of Cape Cod was inhabited by the Nausets, a tribe closely connected with the Wampanoags. Due to their previous negative experience with the English, the Nausets were hostile to all English people coming to the area. As the Pilgrims got to know later, the local natives were “ill affected towards the English, by reason of one Hunt, a master of a ship, who deceived the people…” (Mourt’s Relation 52). There is no doubt, that the Indians knew about Mayflower and that the Pilgrims and their actions were watched closely by the locals. The first encounter happened after a small party of English settlers under the command of Miles Standish, their military leader, went ashore and met six Indians. The Indians were scared and run to the woods, being chased by the English, who wanted to make a contact. After the Indians managed to escape them, Standish’s party continued to explore the area. The next day they came across some heaps of sand, presumably an Indian grave site. After a while of digging, they found a bow and some arrows, but then they stopped because they “deemed them graves” and put the things back for they thought “it would be odious unto them to ransack their sepulchres” (Mourt’s Relation 21).

Strangely, when they discovered another heap a little further, “made like the former” but “newly done”, they changed their mind again and uncovered it. They found a kettle and baskets full of corn, which they decided to take with them. Winslow later implied in his journal, that they knew they were doing a wrong thing:

We were in suspense what to do with it and the kettle, and at length, after much consultation, we concluded to take the kettle and as much of the corn as we could carry away with us; and when our shallop came, if we could find any of the people, and come to parley with them, we would give them the kettle again, satisfy them for their corn” (Mourt’s Relation 22).

33
Despite their initial hesitation, the settlers continued in opening Indian graves and took all the dried corn they could find, along with some beans and other things. Winslow later explained: “And sure it was God’s good providence that we found this corn, for else we know not how we should have done, for we knew not how we should find or meet with any Indians, except it be to do us a mischief” (Mourt’s Relation 26).

This must have obviously upset the local Nausets who still kept their distance, watching their provisions for the coming winter disappear. One night, however, the Indians tried to attack the English encampment on the shore, but retreated after the settlers used their muskets. As Bradford commented: “Thus it pleased God to vanquish their enemies and give them deliverance”(77). What was God’s providence for the English, must have been seen as looting graves and stealing food by the Nausets. In spite of the fact that the Pilgrims were in desperate situation and that they later did compensate the Nausets for the corn, surely, this was not the best way for the English colonists to start friendly relations with the Native inhabitants.

The Pilgrims now had some corn to eat and sow but they could not find any suitable place for their plantation at Cape Cod. They turned more inland and later settled in the area of present-day Plymouth, near the mouth of Jones River. They liked the site because the land around had been already cleared, there was water to drink and there was a possibility of building a fortification. The place used to be a site of a Wampanoag village Patuxet, but it was uninhabited because the Indians living there had been killed by plague. There the Pilgrims survived the first winter. In spring, only about a half of them were still alive, because of various diseased, the lack of quality food and shelter, and severe weather conditions (Mourt’s Relation 41; Vaughan, New England Frontier 67-68).

During the winter the Pilgrims did not meet any Indians, but they knew that they “came skulking about them, and would sometimes show themselves aloof off, but when any approached near them, they would run away” (Bradford 87). The local Wampanoag Indians probably waited for the right time to meet their new neighbors. The time came in February 1621, when two Wampanoags tried to approach the settlers but run away after the English went to meet them fully armed. The appearance of Indians in the proximity of New Plymouth caused that the Pilgrims brought some cannons from Mayflower and prepared for an Indian attack (Mourt’s Relation 50).
While the settlers were in the middle of discussing their military defense one Saturday in March 1621, an Indian boldly entered the settlement. His name was Samoset, and he was an Abenaki sagamore, temporarily staying with the Wampanoags. Because of his earlier contacts with English fishermen, he could speak some English. He gave the Pilgrims the first information regarding their Native neighbors. Instead of beer which he asked for, the Pilgrims gave him some “strong water”\(^2\) and engaged in a mutual conversation. The Pilgrims spent the whole afternoon speaking with the evidently rather talkative and well-entertained native. When Winslow described their first encounter with Samoset he wrote:

> All the afternoon we spent in communication with him; we would gladly have been rid of him at night, but he was not willing to go this night. Then we thought to carry him on shipboard, wherewith he was well content, and went into the shallop, but the wind was high and the water scant, that it could not return back. We lodged him that night at Stephen Hopkins' house, and watched him. (52)

To the Pilgrim’s relief, Samoset finally left the next morning, but only to return the next day with five other Indians. “We gave them entertainment as we thought was fitting them; they did eat liberally of our English victuals. They made semblance unto us of friendship and amity; they sang and danced after their manner, like antics” (Mourt’s Relation 53). The Indians also brought with them some tools which had been stolen from the colonist some time ago and some skins to trade. Then the settlers, in Winslow’s words, “dismissed them so soon as we could”, and “carried them along with our arms to the place where they left their bows and arrows, whereat they were amazed”. The only exception was Samoset, who “either was sick or feigned himself so, and would not go with them, and stayed with us till Wednesday morning” (Mourt’s Relation 54).

---

\(^2\) It might be surprising for some people that the Puritans often drank alcohol. Beer, or more precisely the lack of it, and some kind of spirits are often mentioned in their first journals. They were by no means teetotalers, and beer in particular was a part of their everyday diet. They drank pure water only when they had nothing better; otherwise, they preferred milk, beer, cider and other beverages. Excessive drinking, however, was frowned upon (Deetz 122-123; Hawke 70-71; Morgan 72; Miller 184).
A few days later, the time came for a visit at a higher level. Massasoit, the sachem of the Wampanoag tribe, accompanied by Squanto and sixty other men came to meet the governor of the Pilgrims. Before Massasoit went to the settlement, he sent Samoset and Squanto to negotiate with the English. Squanto, who had unwillingly spent some time in Europe, and was a sole survivor of the tribe that used to live at the site of Plymouth plantation, was familiar with English customs and language. He would later help the Pilgrims as a translator and mediator. According to Bradford, Squanto was “a special instrument sent of God for their good beyond their expectation” (89).

After some hesitation and exchange of gifts and hostages in order to assure that no one will be hurt, Massasoit entered the Plymouth settlement. The Pilgrims prepared to welcome the local “king” among them: “Then instantly came our governor with drum and trumpet after him, and some of few musketeers. After salutations, our governor kissing his hand, the king kissed him, and so they sat down. The governor called for some strong water, and drunk to him, and he drunk a great draught that made him sweat all the while after” (Mourt’s Relation 56).

With Squanto translating, the two leaders led some negotiation resulting in a formal treaty. Massasoit agreed that:

I. That neither he nor any of his, should injure or do hurt to any of their people.
II. That if any of his did any hurt to any of theirs, he should send the offender that they might punish him.
III. That if any thing were taken away from any of theirs, he should cause it to be restored; and they should do the like to his.
IV. That if any did unjustly war against him, they would aid him; and if any did war against them, he should aid them.
V. That he should send to his neighbours confederates to certify them of this, that they might not wrong them, but might be likewise comprised in the conditions of peace.
VI. That when their men came to them, they should leave their bows and arrows behind them. (Bradford 88-89)

This first treaty is often described as an “even-handed and fair” agreement between Native Americans and English settler (Salisbury 115; Vaughan, New England Frontier 71; Wilson 80). Interestingly, there are some slight differences in the formulation of the treaty
in various primary sources. Winslow, who gives a more detailed and less diplomatic description of the event than Bradford, writes in his journal in point VI. “That when their men came to us, they should leave their bows and arrows behind them, as we should do our pieces when we came to them” (Mourt’s Relation 57). The part describing the reciprocity of disarming during mutual meetings is for some reason omitted in Bradford and later in Morton’s official history (Bradford 89; Morton 40).

Moreover, Winslow adds that if Massasoit would agree with the above mentioned points, “King James would esteem of him as his friend and ally” (Mourt’s Relation 57). Bradford does not mention it at all and Morton later changes this statement and mentions it as the point VII, included in the treaty. To make it more explicit, Morton also adds that by agreeing with the treaty Massasoit “at the same time acknowledged himself content to be the subject of our sovereign Lord the King aforesaid, his heirs and successors; and gave unto them all land adjacent, to them and their heirs forever” (40). However, nothing leading to this conclusion is mentioned in the original accounts.

These noteworthy differences show that the text of the treaty could have been understood differently by the both sides or was later changed according to the needs of the English. Salisbury claims that: “These discrepancies between the private and public accounts indicate that among themselves the English regarded the treaty as one not of alliance and friendship between equals but of submission by one party to the domination of the other” (115). Wilson agrees with such a description and says that the treaty “clearly favoured the English” and that “it contains many of the seeds of later misunderstanding and conflict” (80).

Although Massasoit mostly likely did not agree to become the subject of the English, he definitely welcomed the settlers as potentially useful allies against the Narragansett tribe, which had put the Wampanoags under pressure and demanded more and more tribute from them (Mourt’s Relation 58; Philbrick 96; Vaughan, New England Frontier 72).

With peace settled, the Wampanoags soon started to sow some corn on the other side of the brook neighbouring the Pilgrim’s settlement. Cleary, the Wampanoags were confident that the English were not a threat to them in any way. The Pilgrims, in Winslow’s words “proceeded on with our common business, from which we had been so often
hindered by the savages coming, and concluding both military orders and of some laws and orders as we thought behooveful for our present estate and condition... (Mourt’s Relation 59). For the Indians it also meant that the two nations had become not only allies, but also friends living together and sharing the land. The Wampanoags kept visiting the English settlement, which made English annoyed because of the lack of food. Their image of mutual relations was much more formal and they wanted to live peacefully next to the Indians not with them (Salisbury 117; Wilson 81).

To solve these problems diplomatically, in summer 1621 the Pilgrims sent Stephan Hopkins and Edward Winslow accompanied by Squanto as their ambassadors to Massasoit’s seat at Pokanoket. Their task was to assure the Wampanoags of their friendship but also “to know where to find them if occasion served, as also to see their strength, discover the country, prevent abuses in their disorderly coming unto us...” (Mourt’s Relation 60). Their mission was successful, although the emissaries felt a little uncomfortable among the natives. Winslow describes it as follows:

Late it grew, but victuals he [Massasoit] offered none, for indeed he had not any, being so newly home. So we desired to go to rest; he laid us on the bed with himself and wife, they at one end and we at the other, it being only planks laid a foot from the ground, and a thin mat upon them. Two more of his chief men for want of room pressed by and upon us, so that we were worse weary of our lodging than of our journey. (Mourt’s Relation 66)

Although Massasoit tried to persuade his guests to stay longer, they wanted to leave as soon as possible because they:

…desired to keep the Sabbath at home: and feared we would either be light-headed for want of sleep, for what with the bad lodging, the savages barbarous singing (for they used to sing themselves asleep), lice and fleas within doors and mosquitoes without, we could hardly sleep all the time of our being there; we much fearing, that if we should stay longer, we should not be able to recover home for want of strength” (Mourt’s Relation 67)

The next step which the Pilgrims desired to do was to make peace with the Nausets at Cape Cod. They managed to achieve it partly because of Massasoit’s intervention and

---

3 The place which they visited is also called Sowams by some authors (Philbrick 107; Vaughan 73).
also due to an incident in which an English boy from the settlement lost his way in the woods and found himself among the Nausets. After some negotiations, the Nausets agreed that they would return the boy to the English, which they did. The English gave them some compensation for the corn they had stolen and made peace with them (Mourt’s Relation 71; Philbrick 112).

But not all went as smoothly as the Pilgrims had planned. One day Hobbamock, another Wampanoag Indian who often stayed with the English, came running to their settlement and told them that Squanto and another friendly Indian were probably killed by a lesser Wampanoag sachem Corbitant, who was supposedly hostile to the settlers. The Pilgrims decided to rescue their precious translator and advisor and to show that they would not let anybody challenge them without consequences. To do so, they sent Miles Standish with other armed men and Hobbamock to Nemasket, the village where the incident supposedly happened, to punish Corbitant. Their orders were “if they found that Squanto was killed, to cut off Corbitant’s head, but not to hurt any but those that had a hand in it” (Bradford 98).

They got to Nemasket at night and entered the Corbitant wigwam to take him by surprise. The only thing they caused was fear and panic, and the scared Indians tried to escape. In general chaos the English shot their muskets and injured some running Indians, only to discover that Corbitant was not there and Squanto and the other Indian were alive, sleeping somewhere in the village. Corbitant escaped and the injured Indians were taken to Plymouth to be cured there. As the Pilgrims later found out, Corbitant only threatened to kill Squanto but did not do so. The English attack, however managed to scare the neighbouring Indians (Bradford 98-99; Mourt’s Relation 74-75; Philbrick 114-115).

Bradford later described the Indian reaction to the Nemasket incident: “After this they [the Pilgrims] had many gratulations from divers sachems, and much firmer peace; yea, those of the Isles of Capawack [Martha’s Vineyard] sent to make friendship; and this Corbitant himself used the meditation of Massasoit to make peace, but was shy to go near them a long while after” (99). In September 1621, nine\(^4\) sachems came to Plymouth to sign

\(^4\) Neal Salisbury also points out that in later histories more names were included. According to him, this was done deliberately to show that the added sachems later violated the treaty, and to justify English invasion to their territory (Salisbury 120).
a peace treaty in which they agreed to become subjects of King James (Philbrick 116; Vaughan, *New England Frontier* 76; Salisbury 119). Clearly, the settlers learnt that to show and use their force is also a possible way of dealing with their Native neighbours.

The Pilgrims also realized that Squanto was not as trustworthy and reliable as they had thought. Squanto used his exceptional position of the ambassador of the English for his own benefit. Edward Winslow later wrote that Squanto wanted to “make himself great in the eyes of his countrymen” and to persuade other Indians that “he could lead us to peace or war at his pleasure” (8). Bradford wrote that “Squanto sought his own ends and played his own game, by putting the Indians in fear and drawing gifts from them to enrich himself” (109).

Moreover, he also “might possess his countrymen with the great fear of us....told them that we had the plague buried in our storehouse, which at our pleasure we could send forth to what place or people we would”. When later Hobbamock asked the English whether they really had the power, they answered “no, but the God of English had it in store, and could send it at his pleasure to the destruction of his and our enemies” (Winslow 9). Taking into account the fact that Native Americans also believed that diseases could have supernatural origin and that a large number of their people had succumbed to the plague just a few years ago, it is certain that it was of great concern to them and that they feared the possibility (Philbrick 133; Simmons, *Spirit of the New England Tribes* 37).

Squanto once even tried to persuade the Pilgrims that Massasoit joined the Narragansetts and that they were about to attack the settlers. When Hobbamock rejected these accusations as lying, they send some Indians to investigate what had happened. They discovered that it was all Squanto’s conspiracy against Massasiot. This made the Wampanoag leader so angry with Squanto, that he demanded his head. Without Bradford’s intervention, he would be probably executed. Undoubtedly, there was a rivalry between Hobbamock and Squanto, and the English colonist became an important part of the power struggle among the tribes within the region. It is not sure how powerful would Squanto become because he died soon, after he had suddenly fallen ill (Bradford 109; Philbrick 134, 138).

Except for minor incidents, the peace between the Wampanoags and the Pilgrims was not broken. The settlers even celebrated their first Thanksgiving accompanied by a
large number of natives. More problematic were their relations with other tribes, especially with the Narragansetts, who were Massasoit’s traditional enemies. One day, a Narragansett messenger came to Plymouth “with a bundle of arrows tied about with a great snakeskin, which their interpreters told them was a threatening and a challenge” (Bradford 106). As their answer, the English “stuffed the skin with powder and shot, and sent it back”, whereupon it “having been posted from place to place a long time, at length came whole back again” (Winslow 6).

Another tribe that the Pilgrims were concerned about were the Massachusetts living further north. Although the Massachusetts were traditional allies of the Wampanoags and were engaged in fur trade with the Plymouth settlers, problems emerged in 1622 when two ships with about sixty new colonists landed in Plymouth. The new settlers, who were mostly single indentured servants, did not share the religious zeal with the Pilgrims and were sent to America by Thomas Weston, a rich London investor (Salisbury 125; Vaughan, *New England Frontier* 82).

Some of these men first settled in Plymouth, while the rest was looking for a place for them to settle. The original Plymouth settlers were upset because they had to feed the unexpected guests, especially when their own supplies of corn were running low, “expecting each day, when God in his providence would disburden us of them” (Winslow 11). Winslow’s description of an uneasy coexistence reveals the nature of their relationship with the newcomers:

> That little store of corn we had, was exceedingly wasted by the unjust and dishonest walking of these strangers, who though they would sometimes seem to help us in our labor about our corn, yet spared not day and night to steal the same, it being then eatable, and pleasant to taste, though green and unprofitable. And though they received much kindness, set light both by it and us; not sparing to requite the love we showed them, with secret backbitings, revilings, etc. the chief of them being forestalled and made against us, before they came, as after appeared…(11)

The Pilgrims were hugely relieved when the new colonists finally found a place for their own settlement in Wessagussett in the Massachusetts Bay and left Plymouth. But this was only the beginning of further problems. Having little food to provide for themselves, the Wessagussett men began to steal it from their Indian neighbours, mostly Massachusetts
tribes. In Bradford’s words they “were an unruly company and had no good government over them (121). Soon, the Wessagussett settlement was on the verge of collapse and some of the English were even said to hire themselves out as servants to the Indians (Vaughan, *New England Frontier* 86).

In the meantime, two important things happened. Firstly, the Pilgrims got to know that many English settlers were massacred in Virginia by the local Indians and they began to fear the same fate. Secondly, their loyal ally Massasoit was said to be dying. Edward Winslow with Hobbamock were sent to see him. Luckily, with Winslow’s help Massasoit managed to recover. Winslow later wrote about the way he helped the Wampanoag sachem:

\[
\text{\ldots having a confection of many comfortable conserves, etc. on the point of my knife, I gave him some, which I could scarce get through his teeth; when it was dissolved in his mouth, he swallowed the juice of it, whereat those that were about him much rejoiced, saying, he had not swallowed anything in two days before. Then I desired to see his mouth, which was exceedingly furred, and his tongue swelled in such manner, as it was not possible for him to eat such meat as they had, his passage being stopped up: then I washed his mouth, and scraped his tongue, and got abundance of corruption out of the same. After which, I gave him more of the confection, which he swallowed with more readiness; then he desiring to drink, I dissolved some of it in water, and gave him thereof: within half an hour this wrought a great alteration in him in the eyes of all that beheld him; presently after his sight began to come to him, which gave him and us good encouragement...}(18)\]

Winslow then killed some fowl and made a strong broth from it, mixed it with some herbs and gave it to Massasoit. After he ate it, “his sight mended more and more, also he had three moderate stools, and took some rest” (Winslow 19). When he recovered completely, Massasoit said to Winslow: “Now I see the English are my friends and love me, and whilst I live I will never forget this kindness they have showed me” (Winslow 19).

Massasoit later had a private meeting with Hobbamock and two other Indians. Hobbamock then revealed Winslow that Massasoit wanted to warn the Pilgrims that some Indian tribes led by the Massachusetts are planning to destroy both English settlements and that the English should kill the alleged conspirators. Whether these accusations were true or not, and whether Massasoit really had said it remains uncertain, but the English definitely
believed Hobbamock’s warning (Salisbury 129; Vaughan, *New England Frontier* 8686; Winslow 20).

In March 1623 another warning came from a Wessaguissett settler who claimed that the Indians were about to attack. Upon this evidence, the Plymouth leaders decided to send Miles Standish with eight other men, “a kind of commando force of assassins”, to solve the problem (Salisbury 129). What followed was described as “the battle of Wessaguissett” by Vaughan and as a “massacre” by Jennings and Thomas Morton (86; 186; 110). Pretending that he wanted to trade with them, Standish lured some of the alleged conspirators, led by a lesser sachem called Wituwamet into a house in Wessaguissett, where the surprised Indians were killed with their own knives. Winslow, who witnessed the killing later wrote that “it is incredible how many wounds these two pniises received before they died, not making any fearful noise, but catching their weapons and striving to the last” (25). Three more Indians were killed later in a similar way and others managed to escape. Consequently, three Englishmen living outside the settlement were killed in revenge by Massachusett Indians (Salisbury 130).

Miles Standish returned to Plymouth with Wituwamet’s head that was later impaled on their fort. This killing terrified the Indians in the region. Although Vaughan comments that “once again Plymouth’s bold action, with a generous assist from fortune, had restored interracial harmony” (88), the real impact is clearly revealed by Winslow’s description:

...this sudden and unexpected execution, together with the just judgment of God upon their guilty consciences, hath so terrified and amazed them, as in like manner they forsook their houses, running to and fro like men distracted, living in swamps and other desert places, and so brought manifold diseases amongst themselves, whereof very many are dead, as Canacum the Sachem of Manomet, Aspinet, the Sachem of Nauset, and Iyanough, Sachem of Mattaciest. This Sachem in his life, in the midst of these distractions, said the God of the English was offended with them, and would destroy them in his anger, and certainly it is strange to hear how many of late have, and still daily die amongst them, neither is there any

---

5 The pnie was a prominent and specially trained Wampanoag or Massachusett warrior with unusual spiritual abilities and stamina. They were often the sachem’s counselors and it was believed that they could not be wounded in combat. Hobbamock and probably also Squanto were pnieses (Simmons, *Spirit of the New England* 40).
likelihood it will easily cease, because through fear they set little or no corn, which is the staff of life, and without which they cannot long preserve health and strength. (27)

What followed was more fear of other English actions than harmony. It unsettled the whole region not only because the English proved unpredictable and violent, but also because Massasoit sided with them against another tribe. This further ruined the fragile equilibrium within the region and also damaged the settlers’ ability to trade with the neighboring tribes. Massasoit became the most powerful sachem in the region and the Pilgrims not only got rid of their troublesome English neighbors, who rather went to Maine, but also gave bloody warning for all those who would dare to challenge them (Philbrick 155).

The Pilgrims tried hard to justify the raid and Winslow later wrote a detailed description of the events to propagandize for the Pilgrims in England. Jennings claims that Winslow “falsified events sufficiently to implicate the Indians as conspirators against Plymouth and to conceal the premeditation of the massacre. He succeeded so brilliantly that the facts of the affair remained buried for more than three centuries” (187).

The fact is, that there were some critics of Plymouth’s actions even among their fellow countrymen. Thomas Morton complained that the raid put all English into bad light and that:

The Salvages of the Massachussets, that could not imagine from whence these men should come, or to what end, seeing them performe such unexpected actions; neither could tell by what name properly to distinguish them; did from that time afterwards call the English Planters Wotawquenange, which in their language signifieth stabbers, or Cutthroates and this name was received by those that came there after for good...(111)

Moreover, criticism came even from John Robinson, a spiritual leader of the Pilgrims and their former pastor back in Holland, who wrote to them: “Oh, how happy a thing it had been, if you had converted some before you had killed any...” and he adds that it was “the punishment to a few, and the fear to many...(Robinson qtd. in Morton 111).

The relations between the Plymouth settlers and the Wampanoags remained peaceful until Massasoit’s death in 1660’s. Other tribes of the region were afraid or too
weak to start an open conflict with the English. For forty years both communities maintained something which can be described as an uneasy peaceful coexistence perpetuated by a mutual need for powerful allies. The reasons for the alliance were pragmatic and lasted as long as each party gained something from it. All main participants of the events including Massasoit, Squanto or Bradford pursued their personal goals and wanted to get as much as possible in the power struggle for themselves and their people.

The number of the English colonist was relatively low and there was enough free land to use for both communities because of the epidemics which had destroyed the Indian population in the region. Due to the facts that both sides needed each other, and that the leaders of both communities developed a kind of personal bond, the relationship worked, even though it was rather strained.

The course of events changed when a new wave of English colonist flooded the shores of New England in search of a new home. Plymouth Colony gradually lost its importance and played only a minor role in further development of the relations between the English settlers and Native Americans. Massasoit, Winslow, Bradford and others died and were replaced by a younger generation which grew up in a different world and which had different needs and opinions.
3. The Great Migration

3.1. The Impact of the Great Migration

When Charles I ascended the throne in 1625, the situation was worsening for the Puritans living in England. Their oppression intensified under the new Archbishop William Laud and many nonconformists decided to move to America.

In 1630, a fleet of eleven ships brought almost one thousand of new English settlers to New England. The migration continued until the beginning of the Civil War when it stopped and some settlers went back to England, although most of them stayed in America. Around 20,000 people came to New England between 1630-1640, settling mainly in the Massachusetts Bay area, founding villages and big cities, Boston being the biggest of them. Many of them were complete families and their leaders were well-educated people with experience of local government. In less than twenty years after their arrival the Puritans had a functioning system of self-government and their own judicial system run by the General Court. Their aim was to build a new society, copying the European lifestyle but strictly following Puritan ideology (Faragher 44; Morgan 79; Norton 30-31).

John Winthrop, the future leader and governor of the Massachusetts Bay Colony, described his vision for the settlement in *A Modell of Christian Charity*, his famous sermon written on the way to America:

> Whatsoever wee did, or ought to have, done, when wee liued in England, the same must wee doe, and more allsoe, where wee goe. That which the most in theire churches maintaine as truthe in profession onely, wee must bring into familiar and constant practise; as in this duty of loue, wee must loue brotherly without dissimulation, wee must loue one another with a pure hearte fervently. Wee must beare one anothers burthens. Wee must not looke onely on our owne things, but allsoe on the things of our brethren….(Winthrop 45)

Winthrop saw the migration as a holy mission to build a better world, as it was predestined for the Puritans by God, and to set an example for others:
Thus stands the cause betwenee God and us. We are entered into Covenant with Him for this worke. Wee have taken out a commission. The Lord hath given us leave to drawe our own articles… Now if the Lord shall please to heare us, and bring us in peace to the place we desire, then hath hee ratified this covenant and sealed our Commission, and will expect a strict performance of the articles contained in it; but if wee shall neglect the observation of these articles which are the ends wee have propounded, and, dissembling with our God, shall fall to embrace this present world and prosecute our carnall intentions, seeking greate things for ourselves and our posterity, the Lord will surely breake out in wrathe against us; be revenged of such a [sinful] people and make us knowe the price of the breache of such a covenant…. Wee shall finde that the God of Israell is among us, when ten of us shall be able to resist a thousand of our enemies; when hee shall make us a prayse and glory that men shall say of succeeding plantations, "the Lord make it likely that of New England." For wee must consider that wee shall be as a citty upon a hill. The eies of all people are uppon us. (Winthrop 46)

Not all immigrants were Puritans or were willing to obey the leaders of the Massachusetts Bay Colony. Gradually, new colonies were established including those of Connecticut, Rhode Island or New Haven. Some of the New England colonies were later absorbed by the others. The colonies were often founded by dissenters who were unsatisfied or argued with the leaders of the Massachusetts Bay Colony, who would not tolerate any plurality of opinions. Roger Williams, for example, was banished from Massachusetts for his unorthodox religious views as well as for his opinions regarding the seizure of Indian land. He obtained some land from Narragansett Indians and later began the colony of Rhode Island, which became a shelter for other dissenters.

Others, as for example John Davenport, had found the Massachusetts Bay Colony not orthodox and pure enough and founded New Haven. In spite of the fact that there was a certain rivalry among the colonies and their leaders often had different opinions and goals, they were able to unite and act together when necessary, especially during the conflicts with Indians (Miller 61-70; Philbrick 161).

Such a massive increase of white population inevitably had its impact on the lives of Native Americans. The traditional patterns of Indian economy were disrupted and Native Americans became more dependent on their European neighbours. Indians needed more and more European goods, whereas the settlers were becoming more self-sufficient and did not need Indian commodities so often. Firearms, ammunition, iron and steel implements
and textiles were among the goods most desired by Native Americans, causing that Indians became more dependent on their more technologically advanced suppliers. This form of trade was beneficial mostly for Europeans and not for Native Americans. Jennings explains that:

In the long run it helped to make Europeans dominant and Indians dependent. It stimulated European industry and enriched European merchants while destroying Indian crafts and impoverishing the tribes. It opened to the Europeans vast new territories and provided the means for their acquisition, but it set the Indians against each other in a deadly competition for subordinate supremacy that ultimately resulted in the dispossession of them all. (102)

Fur trade changed Indian lifestyle and Indian activities became focused on obtaining goods desired by European traders. It also altered the Indian attitude to ecosystem, because it “corrupted the spiritual framework within which hunting had traditionally been carried out” and it led to “all-out war on the beaver and other fur-bearing animals” (Nash 237).

With the hunger for pelts or access to them, there were more conflicts among Native Americans as the competition among them was growing and they were often sucked into the conflicts of the European colonizers. Additionally, the conflicts became bloodier and the number of casualties grew due to the introduction of European weaponry. Moreover, another wave of diseases in 1633-1634 killed many natives including some important sachems in the region, which consequently led to further power struggle among the Indians (Vaughan, New England Frontier 103; Nash 237-238).

The tribes in the Narragansett Bay, the Pequots and the Narragansetts, also increased their production of wampum, which became a useful trade commodity. These painstakingly made shell beads had been highly valued among all the Indians of the region and although prior to the European arrival they had been used mostly as sacred objects, they soon developed into a form of “native money” used both by the English and the natives. These beads could be exchanged for any other goods and their massive production or, as Salisbury calls it, “the wampum revolution” soon “pervaded native culture” because Indians “were modifying their seasonal cycle to engage in specialized production for a market whose needs were determined by non-natives and non-native values” (149).
The Europeans were well aware of commercial potential of wampum and soon developed its counterfeit version leading to its mass consumption. Therefore, it began to lose its original value:

The successful counterfeit destroyed the value of the real article. As far as the Indians were concerned, the copies were just as pretty as the original, and just as suitable for decorative purposes, as well as being cheaper. Wampum disappeared, and instead there began the trade in beads with Indians which, for well over a century, made an important export for countries such as Bohemia. (La Farge 76)

Nevertheless, there was still one thing that the Native Americans possessed and that the Europeans desired most. It was the Indian land. According to the European concept of that time, a European monarch had the right to possess and control the land which was discovered in his name, on condition that its inhabitants were not Christians. Through various patents, the monarch could delegate this right to his subject. Another concept called *vacuum domicilium* meant that settlers could seize the land which was “waste” or uncultivated in the European sense. The Puritans believed that it was their holy right to subdue the earth, cultivate it and have dominion over its natural inhabitants. Even before he really landed in America, John Winthrop declared in his journal that:

…As for the Natives in New England, they inclose noe Land, neither have any settled habytation, nor any tame Cattle to improve the Land by, & soe have noe other but a Naturall Right to these Countries. Soe as if we leave them sufficient for their use, we may lawfully take the rest, there being more then enough for them & us. (“Manifest Destiny”)

Although some Englishmen objected to the application of these concepts to Indian land, Roger Williams is the most famous example, generally, these claims were considered legitimate (Nash 79-80; Vaughan, *New England Frontier* 110-111).

Despite the fact that in their eyes the Puritans had the theoretical right to simply dispossess the Indians of their land, in practice they used other methods how to get it. One of the ways was to purchase it. Although Vaughan claims that “there is no doubt as to the willingness, often eagerness of the Indian to sell land” and that “the native often took the initiative in such transactions, for he coveted the white man’s goods as keenly as the settler

They could, for example, use alcohol during negotiations, buy the land from an Indian who had no right to sell it, or fine an owner for offending the English law. This was often the case when Indians killed English cattle roaming free and destroying Indian crops. The fine was later paid off by transferring a tract of land to an English settler. It is true that both the English and Indian leaders tried to regulate the trade with land but they were only partly successful. Another way how to gain land was by conquest in an armed conflict. A particular tribe which “caused” the war was, after its defeat, dispossessed of its land, which was allotted to the winner (Nash 81; Jennings 105, 257).

There is, however, disagreement over the Indian understanding of land tenure and its selling. Some insist that Indians sold only a share in the use of land and did not mean to abandon it forever, others believe that the Indian and European concepts were not so different and that the Indians, at least at the time of the Great Migration, understood fully the impact of the transaction. In any way, the Native inhabitants were slowly but surely losing their land and were getting under the control of the colonists. The Indians who transferred their land to the settlers also surrendered it, and consequently themselves, to English jurisdiction and lost their independence (Jennings 129, 137; Vaughan, *New England Frontier* 105; Wilson 84).

### 3.2. Indians of New England and Christianity

All English settlers were Christians and shared the same European-centered worldview. Their faiths varied in details but they all believed that Christianity is the only true religion. They were convinced that they should spread their faith among “ignorant” non-Christians who would be inevitably lost if they adhere to their “savage” beliefs and refuse conversion (Rollings 121).
For the Puritans, extension of God’s glory was one of the proclaimed motives of colonizing New England. The charter of Massachusetts Bay Company declares that “inhabitants there, may be so religiously, peaceably, and civilly governed, as their good life and orderly conversation, may win and incite the natives of country, to the knowledge and obedience of the only true God and Savior of mankind, and the Christian faith, which in our royal intention, and the adventurers free profession, is the principal end of this plantation”. The English rulers had hoped that Native Americans would be eager to receive the true faith and understand its superiority over their pagan beliefs. Therefore, the seal of the Massachusetts Bay Company depicts an Indian saying “come over and help us”. In reality, however, the Native Americans proved to be not so eager to be “helped” (Axtell 55; Salisbury 178).

Although they soon acknowledged the advantages of European goods and technology, most Native Americans seemed to stubbornly stick to their old worldviews and were only sometimes willing to incorporate some Christian features into their own culture. They believed that when English colonists were powerful, their God must be powerful too. This was especially the case when they saw how the English were able to resist diseases which had killed the natives in large numbers. It is not coincidence that the first converts usually came from the tribes which were weakened by the epidemics and often lacked strong leadership. The most prominent sachems of the region including Massasoit, Metacom, Ninigret, Canonicus, Miantonomo and even Uncas resisted Christianity, as it directly undermined their authority over their people and destroyed their culture (Nash 117; Simmons, Spirit of the New England Tribes 74).

In the Puritans’ view, to become a good Christian meant a complete religious, cultural and social change. An Indian adept for conversion had to reject his Indian lifestyle and habits completely and become “European” in every way. Some suggested rules for the Indians converts in Concord area were for example:

That there shall be no more powwowing amongst the Indians. And if any shall hereafter powwow, (powwows are witches or sorcerers, that cure by help of the devil,) both he that shall powwow and he that shall procure him to powwow shall pay 20s.apiece…That they do observe the Lord’s day, and whosoever shall profane it shall pay 20s. …That there shall be no allowance to pick lice, as formerly, and eat them, and whosoever shall offend in this
case shall pay for every louse a penny...That they will wear their hair comely, as the English do, and whosoever shall offend herein shall pay 5s. ...They intend to reform themselves in their former greasing themselves, under the penalty of 5s for every default...If any commit the sin of fornication, being single person, the man shall pay 20s and the woman 10s...Whosoever shall commit adultery shall be put to death...They shall not disguise themselves in their mournings, as formerly, nor shall they keep a great noise by howling.... (Shepard 474-475)

Even if an Indian wanted to convert, it was extremely difficult if not impossible for him to meet all Puritan requirements. Therefore, by the close of the colonial period, not many Indians had been transformed into civilized Englishmen. On the other hand, many Englishmen decided to live among Indians (Axtell 88; Vaughan, New England Frontier 237).

The early English missionaries like John Eliot or Thomas Mayhew were disappointed with the number of Indian converts and their missions were only partly successful due to their high demands and also other factors like language barrier or armed conflicts between the English and Indians, or simply because the Indians did not feel the need to abandon their old traditions and accept a new belief. Mayhew, who managed to convert many Indians of Martha’s Vineyard without any outside aid, based his mission on voluntarism and his converts stayed loyal to the English during the later conflicts. In contrast, Eliot, who used more authoritative approach based on repression and imposing English culture on the Indians was less successful, especially when it comes to the loyalty of his converts (Jennings 252).

Native Americans sometimes made it difficult for Christian missionaries. The Indians were difficult to persuade and their questions sometimes surprised those who wanted to convert them. (Vaughan, New England Frontier 251). During a discussion in which Roger Williams tried to persuade Narragansett Indians about the existence of heaven and hell, two Indians present asked each other: “But how do you know yourself, that your soules goe to the Southwest; did you ever see a soule goe thither?” The answer of the second native was: “When did he [Roger Williams] see a soul goe to Heaven or Hell?” (Williams 117). On another occasion, an Indian sachem did his best to mock Eliot on his mission at Cape Cod.
We observed much opposition against him [Eliot], and hearing of him at the day appointed, especially by one of the chiefest sachems in those parts, a man of a fierce, strong, and spurious spirit, whom the English, therefore, call by the name Jehu; who, although before the day appointed for preaching, promised very fair that he would come and bring his men with him; yet that very morning, when they were to be present, he sends out almost all his men to sea, pretending fishing; and therefore, although at last he came late himself to the sermon, yet his men were absent, and when he came himself, would not seem to understand anything, although he did understand, as some of the Indians later told us, when Mr. Eliot by himself and by them inquired of him if he understood what was spoken; yet he continued hearing what was said with a dogged look and a discontented countenance. (Shepard 479)

Despite all complications, by 1674 there were fourteen so called “praying towns” in New England. These towns were places where the Indian converts should learn to live according to the Gospel and become “civilized”, undistracted by both hostile settlers and non-Christian Indian. The Indians living in praying towns agreed to accept English lifestyle and follow English rules (Rollings 125).

Eliot tried to persuade the Massachusetts Indians that prior to their conversion they had lived in sin and were damned. Later, to show his success, Eliot wrote a tract called Tears of Repentance: Or, A Further Narrative of the Progress of the Gospel Amongst the Indians, in which various Indian coverts gave confessions of their sins and the power of the Gospel. For example, one Indian regretted that “before I prayed onto God, I greatly sinned, I prayed to many gods, and used Paowaning [Powwowing], Adultery, Lust, Lying and all other sins, and many were my sins, evil thoughts, evil words and nothing else but evil, hatred, and pride, and all sins against God…”(Eliot 17).

Another Indian who confessed his sins in a similar way said that: “sometimes I think I am like unto Satan, because I do all these sins…therefore I am like the Devil. Now I know I deserve to go to Hell, because all these sins I have committed...sometimes my heart is humbled, and I desire to fear God, because he is a great God, and I desire to do what he saith…but now I am ashamed of all my sins, and my heart is broken, and all these my sins I cast off…” (Eliot 15-16).

However sincere could have been the intentions of some missionaries, the praying towns were more or less forerunners of Indian reservations and led to segregation (Wilson 94-95). Jennings goes even further and concludes that the missionary activities of John
Eliot served mostly for propaganda back in England and that their main purpose was not an interest in “poor” Indians but in the money of English donors, who believed that their financial support would help to convert and “civilize” Native Americans. Moreover, Jennings claims that the numbers of converts were exaggerated and fabricated, and that the praying Indians were used as “an instrument of expansion”, subverting the independent tribes (244, 246-247).
4. The Pequot War

4.1. The Causes of the War

The large number of English immigrants in the Massachusetts Bay caused a tension within the colony. Those unsatisfied with the Bay leaders sought a new place to settle. One of the places suitable for a new plantation was the fertile area surrounding the Connecticut River. The territory was controlled by the Pequots, a powerful tribe that had migrated to the area about a hundred years before the English arrival, subjugating weaker tribes on the way. Therefore, the Pequots had many traditional enemies among their native neighbors, especially the Narragansettts. The Pequots managed to control the trade with the Dutch on the west and were determined to keep their hegemony in the region (Jennings 188; Salisbury 204).

In 1630’s, however, the Pequots started to lose their power. Firstly, another epidemic of smallpox hit the area and many Indians of the region died. William Bradford later wrote that “it pleased God to visit these Indians with a great sickness and such a mortality that of a thousand, above nine and a half hundred of them died, and many of them did rot above ground for want of burial” (302). Bradford was moved by the suffering and described in detail the scale of the disaster.

...they fall into a lamentable condition, as they lie on their hard mats, the pox breaking and mattering, and running one into another, their skin cleaving by reason thereof to the mats they lie on. When they turn them, a whole side will flay off at once as it were, and they will be all of a gore blood, most fearful to behold. And then being very sore, what with cold and other distempers, they die like rotten sheep. (Bradford 302)

Secondly, the friendly relations between the Dutch and the Pequots were disrupted by an incident in which the Pequots killed some Narragansett Indians attempting to trade with the Dutch at their trading post called the House of Hope. The Dutch reaction was quick and harsh. They kidnapped and later killed Tatobem, the Pequot grand sachem, and closed their trading post. This led to disintegration within the Pequot tribe, when some lesser sachems rejected the authority of Sassacus, Tatobem’s son and successor. Fearing a
conflict with both the Dutch and the Narragansetts and led by the necessity to trade, the Pequots turned to the English to get a new ally.

In 1634, Pequot ambassadors came to Boston, offering some wampum and land in exchange for trade and peace with the English. The Pequots had also hoped that the English would help them to keep peace with the Narragansetts. Certainly, in the mid-1630’s the Pequots did not intend to make the English their new enemy and were eager to be in friendly terms with them. They were “anything but the ruthless conquerors of the Puritan-inspired legend that continues to enjoy historical currency” (Salisbury 201-211).

The Bay leaders were of course interested and saw it as a chance to control the Pequots and to gain new land for settlement. Yet there was an obstacle. A few months before the meeting in Boston, an English merchant had been killed by Indians. His name was John Stone. Stone had a reputation of a troublemaker and violent drunkard and was previously banished under the penalty of death from the Massachusetts Bay Colony. On his way to Virginia he went up the Connecticut River, where he kidnapped some local Indians to gain ransom. Nevertheless, the Indians managed to surprise him, killed Stone and six other men of his crew (Cave, The Pequot War 71-72).

There is a disagreement over the origin of the Stone’s killers¹. It is certain that he had been killed either by the Pequots or by Western Niantics, their tributaries (i.e. they were controlled by the Pequots and had to pay them tribute, usually in a form of wampum). Cave claims that Stone was probably killed by the joint forces of both. Whatever was the case, the Puritans held the Pequots responsible (“Who Killed John Stone” 517). This detail is important, because Stone’s murder was later used as one of the major reasons for the war with the Pequots. If he had been killed by the Western Niantic, the Pequots could not hand in his murderers to Boston authorities, which was one of their conditions for peace, because “to seize the persons of Niantic tributaries and deliver them to Massachusetts would have violated all Indian conception of custom and honor” (Jennings 195).

The Bay magistrates imposed several demands on the Pequot ambassadors. They wanted them to promise to deliver those who had killed Stone together with a large quantity of wampum and skins. The ambassadors claimed that the Stone’s killers were all

---
¹ Jennings, Salisbury and other authors who are most critical of the Puritan dealing with the Indians claim that Stone was killed by Western Niantic and that the Pequots were innocent (Jennings 194; Salisbury 218). They base the claim on Mason’s account written in the 1670’s (10).
dead except two, and argued that Stone deserved death because of his actions against the Indians. Winthrop and other magistrates believed their version also because Stone had had such a bad reputation in Boston and acknowledged that Stone was killed “in a just quarrel” (Winthrop qtd. in Bradford 326).

However, advised by Puritan clergy, Winthrop still demanded the two remaining Indians and the large amount of wampum. It was more than the ambassadors could promise and they agreed to report the demands for the treaty to the Pequot council, which later refused to ratify it because, in their understanding, it would equate to their subordination. Nevertheless, the Bay leaders considered the treaty agreed upon by the both sides. In Jennings words, the Puritan leaders “transformed English demands into agreements that could not possibly have been made” (191).

Because the Pequot council did not ratify the “treaty”, and therefore did not send the remaining killers and wampum to Boston, the Puritans thought that they had the right for retribution. Moreover, there was another incident increasing the tension between the two parties. Another Englishman was killed and mutilated on Block Island, this time it was a respected trader called John Oldham. Despite the fact that he was killed by the Eastern Niantics who were affiliated with the Narragansett and therefore had nothing to do with the Pequots, the Puritans again considered the Pequots guilty on the basis that some of the killers were allegedly hiding among them (Cave, The Pequot War 72; Jennings 207-208; Vaughan, New England Frontier 125-126).

The Narragansetts did their best to avoid responsibility for murdering a respected Englishmen. They wanted to stay neutral, assuring the English that they wanted peace with them. To prove it, the grand Narragansett sachems Canonicus and Miantonomo sent their warriors to Block Island to punish the local Indians, claiming that some culprits had taken refuge with the Pequots. The English were not satisfied with the result and decided to send their own punitive expedition to Block Island and to the Pequot territory. About ninety soldiers under the command of John Endicott should kill all male Indians on Block Island, seize all children and women and then go the Pequots to demand wampum and the supposed killers of Stone and Oldham (Vaughan, New England Frontier 128).

---

2 Jennings explains that Oldham’s murder had been probably planned by some lesser Narragansett sachems because they held Oldham responsible for spreading the smallpox epidemic among the Indians (208).
When Endicott and his men arrived at Block Island they found just a few Indians to kill, the rest of them managed to hide in swamps. Disappointed English soldiers then decided to loot and destroy everything they came across. John Underhill, a member of the punitive expedition, later described it in detail:

Having spent that day in burning and spoyling the Iland, wee tooke up the quarter for that night, about midnight my selfe went out with ten men about two miles from our quarter, and discovered the most eminent Plantation, they had in the Iland where was much corne, many Wigwams, and great heapes of mats; but fearing lest wee should make an alarum by setting fire on them; wee left them as wee found them, and peaceably departed to our quarter: and the next morning with 40. men marched up to the same Plantation, burnt their houses, cut downe their corne, destroyed some of their dogges in stead of men, which they left in their Wigwams. (7)

The English then proceeded to the Pequot territory, where they continued in destruction and looting among the Pequots, who were pleading for peace. With the English troops, there was a Massachusett Indian who killed a Pequot warrior and later sent his scalp to the Narragansett sachem Canonicus, who accepted it. In Indian understanding this meant that the Massachusett and Narragansett Indians decided to side with the English. From the Pequot perspective, it was a declaration of war (Salisbury 214).

The isolated Pequots made the last attempt to get the Narragansetts on their side and join forces against the English. The Pequots did not consider themselves guilty of either violating the treaty, which did not exist in their understanding, or killing the English traders. In their eyes, the English were the aggressors invading their country and trying to subjugate them. The Pequots tried to persuade the Narragansett leaders that:

... the English were strangers and began to overspread their country, and would deprive them thereof in time, if they were suffered to grow and increase. And if the Narragansetts did assist the English to subdue them [the Pequots], they did but make way for their own overthrow, for if they were rooted out, the English would soon take occasion to subjugate them. And if they would hearken to them they should not need to fear the strength of the English, for they would not come to open battle with them but fire their houses, kill their cattle, and lie in ambush for them as they went abroad upon their occasions; and all this they might easily do without any or little danger to themselves. The which course being
held, they well saw the English could not long subsist but they would either be starved with hunger or be forced to forsake the country. (Bradford 329-330)

Luckily for the English, Roger Williams helped to persuade the hesitating Narragansetts to reject the Pequot offer. Unfortunately for the Narragansetts, the Pequot warnings proved to be accurate in the near future (Jennings 213; Philbrick 178).

4.2. The Mystic Massacre

Meantime, new settlers kept moving into the Connecticut area. In 1635, Fort Saybrook was founded at the mouth of the Connecticut River on a site given to the English by the Western Niantic and by 1636 about 800 colonists lived in Windsor, Dorchester and Newtown, the three biggest towns in the region. The migration was getting out of control of both Massachusetts and Plymouth authorities. New settlers often ignored all regulations and were purchasing land directly from lesser local sachems causing a tension in the area. The tension was also growing among the English colonies, because they wanted to gain control over the new settlements and expand their sphere of influence (Salisbury 216-217).

After Oldham’s death and the following English retaliation in 1636, the Pequots had no choice but to fight or surrender and become English subjects. They felt that the English had no right to retaliate on them and regarded themselves as wronged. They turned their anger at Fort Saybrook and the English settlers living nearby. Lion Gardener, the commander of Saybrook Fort, criticized the Massachusetts Bay leaders for sending the punitive expedition to Block Island and Pequot territory. He said:

...you come hither to raise these wasps about my eares, and then you will take wing and flee away, but, when I had seen their commisson I wondered and made many allegations against the Manner of it, but goe they did to Pequit and as they came without acquainting any of us in the river with it So they went against our will, for I knew it I should loose our corne field.

(Gardener 38)
Gardener was right. The siege of the fort began and in April 1637 and soon some settlers were killed too. The following Indian raids on Connecticut settlements terrified the English. John Underhill later provided some details of atrocities which were supposedly committed by the Pequots. Underhill wrote that “like the divell their commander, they runne up and downe as roaring Lyons, compassing all corners of the Countrey for a prey, seeking whom they might devoure (14). He also described what happened to an Englishman who had been captured by the Pequots during the siege of Fort Saybrook. Underhill claimed that the Pequots “brought him home, tied him to a stake, flead his skin off, put hot imbers betweene the flesh and the skinne, cut off his fingers and toes, and made hatbands of them” and also asked himself “would not this have moved the hearts of men to hazard blood, and life, and all they had, to overcome such a wicked insolent Nation? (14)

The full-scale war started. Because the Massachusetts Colony was consumed by its inner quarrels and Plymouth Colony was reluctant to take part, Connecticut leaders took the initiative. The Connecticut Colony decided not to wait for the Massachusetts and Plymouth, and mobilized its troops under the command of Captain John Mason and sent them to punish the Pequots for:

...their outrageous Violence against the English, having Murdered about Thirty of them, their great Pride and Insolency, constant pursuit in their malicious Courses, with their engaging other Indians in their Quarrel against the English, who had never offered them the least Wrong; who had in all likelihood Espoused all the Indians in the Country in their Quarrel, had not GOD by more than an ordinary Providence prevented. (Mason 11)

The Connecticut forces were joined by about seventy Mohegan warriors under the lead of their chief Uncas. The Mohegans were once a part of the Pequot tribe but they had separated from them and finally sided with the English in 1636 (Salisbury 210, 219).

The Connecticut and Mohegan forces gathered at Fort Saybrook where they were reluctantly reinforced by some Massachusetts soldiers under Captain John Underhill, who had been present at the fort to defend it. The original plan was to directly attack the main Pequot village on the Pequot River and kill their sachem Sassacus. However, Mason later changed his mind, probably considering the direct attack too dangerous for his inexperienced soldiers, and decided to sail to the Narraganset Bay and attack the Pequots
from the rear with the help of the Narragansett tribe. Instead of attacking a well-defended main village, the English chose to destroy a lesser Pequot village on the Mystic River (Vaughan, *New England Frontier* 144).

The reason for the change is not clear. Underhill wrote that they “set sayle for the Narraganset Bay, deluding the Pequeats thereby, for they expected us to fall into Pequeat River” (20). Mason’s account reveals that there was a strong opposition against the second plan because the Connecticut leaders had specifically instructed Mason to attack the main fort on the Pequot River. According to Mason, the final decision was made by God through Mr. Stone, the Fort Saybrook’s chaplain. Mason wrote that he had asked Mr. Stone:

…that he would commend our Condition to the LORD, that Night, to direct how & in what manner we should demean our selves in that Respect; He being our Chaplin and lying aboard our *Pink*, the Captain on shoar. In the Morning very early Mr. Stone came ashoar to the Captain’s Chamber, and told him, he had done as he had desired, and was fully satisfied to sail for Narragansett. (12)

Jennings offers another explanation and writes that Mason simply wanted to avoid attacking Pequot warriors and chose to massacre Indian civilians instead. “Battle, as such” he wrote, “was not his [Mason’s] purpose. Battle is only one of the ways to destroy an enemy’s will to fight. Massacre can accomplish the same end with less risk and Mason had determined that massacre would be his objective” (Jennings 220).

The fact is that English troops together with some Mohegan and Narragansett Indians attacked the smaller Pequot village called Mystic. Although it was also palisaded, there were hardly any Pequot warriors in it. The village was full of women, children and old men, whereas most of the warriors were in the second village on the Pequot River. Although Mason claims that before the attack Mystic had been reinforced by some 150 Pequot warriors, the reality was probably different and there were fewer fighting men in the village (Jennings 222; Salisbury 221).

The attack itself started at dawn on 26 May 1637. The English troops surrounded the village and with two rings, the outer consisting of Indians, to prevent those who escaped from the village from breaking through. The attack started in a chaotic way when the English entered the palisaded village and opened fire on everything that moved.
Surprised Indians tried to get out of their wigwams only to be shot down. Seeing that the attack was getting too disorganized, the English set the village on fire and retreated. Underhill later described the scene:

...seeing the Fort was too hot for us, we devised a way how we might save ourselves and prejudice them, Captaine Mason entering into a Wigwam, brought out a fire-brand, after hee had wounded many in the house, then hee set fire on the West-side where he entred, my selfe set fire on the South end with a traine of Powder, the fires of both meeting in the center of the Fort blazed most terribly, and burnt all in the space of halfe an houre; many courageous fellowes were unwilling to come out, and fought most desperately through the Palisadoes, so as they were scorched and burnt with the very flame, and were deprived of their armes, in regard the fire burnt their very bowstrings, and so perished valiantly: mercy they did deserve for their valour, could we have had opportunitie to have bestowed it; many were burnt in the Fort, both men, women, and children, others forced out, and came in troopes to the Indians, twenty, and thirtie at a time, which our soldiers received and entertained with the point of the sword; downe fell men, women, and children, those that escaped us, fell into the hands of the Indians, that were in the reere of us; it is reported by themselves, that there were about foure hundred soules in this Fort, and not above five of them escaped out of our hands. Great and dolefull was the bloody sight to the view of young soldiery that never had bee in Warre, to see so many soules lie gasping on the ground so thicke in some places, that you could hardly passe along. (21)

According to Mason, even more than four hundred Pequots were killed. He claimed that about six or seven hundred of Indians died that day (Mason 16). Only two English soldiers were killed and about twenty wounded. When the Pequot warriors in the fort on the Pequot River discovered that Mystic had been attacked, they hurried there to help. They came too late. Their attempt to follow the perpetrators and take revenge on them was unsuccessful. They only encountered Narragansett, Mohegan and English troops that were just being reinforced by other Massachusetts men, and were defeated. Nevertheless, Sassacus and some of his warriors managed to escape and flee into wilderness (Jennings 225).

The Puritans had no doubts about the justness of the massacre. As they saw it, it was a just punishment for Pequot’s insolence and pride. As usual, they also saw the defeat of the Pequots as God’s providence. William Bradford commented that:
It was a fearful sight to see them thus frying in the fire and the streams of blood quenching the same, and horrible was the stink and scent thereof; but the victory seemed a sweet sacrifice, and they gave the praise thereof to God, who had wrought so wonderfully for them, thus to enclose their enemies in their hands and give them so speedy a victory over so proud and insulting an enemy. (331)

However, not all the participants of the battle were satisfied with the way in which it was fought. The Narragansett allies in particular had not expected such a massacre of women and children. Their concept of war was different. Underhill revealed the Narragansett reaction in his account: “Our Indians came to us, and much rejoiced at our victories, and greatly admired the manner of English mens fight: but cried mach it, mach it; that is, it is naught, it is naught, because it is too furious, and slaiies too many men” (23). For those who might still find the attack too brutal, Underhill offered an interesting reference to the Bible to justify the massacre:

It may bee demanded, Why should you be so furious (as some have said) should not Christians have more mercy and compassion? But I would referre you to Davids warre, when a people is growne to such a height of bloud, and sinne against God and man, and all confederates in the action, there hee hath no respect to persons, but harrowes them, and sawes them, and puts them to the sword, and the most terriblest death that may bee: sometimes the Scripture declareth women and children must perish with their parents; some-time the case alters : but we will not dispute it now. We had sufficient light from the word of God for our proceedings. (21-22)

The result of the conflict was disastrous for the Pequots. The tribe practically ceased to exist. Some of those who survived the massacre surrendered to the Narragansetts and Mohegans without fight expecting fair treatment, others were hunted down by both the English and their Indian allies. Sassacus and some of his people tried to flee to the Mohawks to the west to find sanctuary in their territory. This attempt to save the tribe proved to be a terrible failure because the Mohawks decided not to enrage the English, and instead of giving the Pequots an asylum, they killed Sassacus and forty of his warriors, cut off their hands and heads and sent them to the English as a gift. By doing this, the
Mohawks could also confiscate the large amount of wampum carried by Sassacus people (Salisbury 225; Vaughan, New England Frontier 150).

The captured Pequots were distributed to the Narragansetts and Mohegans, or sold as slaves to West Indies. Some lived in the English colonies working as servants. Pequot’s territory was mostly annexed by the English, leading to ongoing disputes between the Massachusetts and Connecticut colonies over the land. The conflict paved the way for the English expansion and, although there was a rivalry among the existing English colonies, it led to further cooperation among the English, resulting in the foundation of the Confederation of New England in the next decade.

On the other hand, it changed the balance of power among the Indian tribes, as once powerful Pequots were replaced by the Mohegans under their crafty and ambitious leader Uncas, who had become an important figure of the region. This caused further friction between the Mohegans and the Narragansetts, who became their new rivals. The Pequot War was a turning point in the relations between the English and Native Americans. Moreover, the English were quick to discover that they can use intertribal rivalry to their own advantage in all conflicts with their Native neighbours (Jennings 226-227; Vaughan, New England Frontier 153-154).
5. King Philip’s War

5.1. The Situation Prior to the Conflict

Although the English had managed to crush the Pequots, they were still living in constant fear of a general Indian uprising against them. There was always a tribe to be blamed for conspiring against the English colonies. The intertribal rivalry continued. Immediately after the remaining Pequots were divided between the Narragansetts and Mohegans, Uncas complained to the colonial authorities that Miantonomo, who was one of the leading Narragansett sachems, had made some attempts to kill him. After the end of the Pequot War in 1638, the both tribes signed a treaty promising not to attack each other without the approval of the English. Therefore, Uncas tried to persuade the English that Miantonomo was violating the treaty. Moreover, Uncas did his best to make the English believe that the Narragansetts were plotting against the colonies. On the other hand, Miantonomo claimed that Uncas was plotting against him, attacking Narragansett Indians when legally hunting in the former Pequot territory. The English had to decide whether to back Uncas or Miantonomo. Finally, they decided to believe Uncas (Jennings 266-267; Vaughan, *New England Frontier* 162-163).

The animosity between the Narragansetts on one side and the Mohegans and English on the other was growing. Miantonomo probably considered a pan-Indian uprising to be a possibility. He traveled to Long Island to persuade the local Montauk Indians to join him. His speech to the Montauks well reveals Miantonomo’s feeling about the English expansion. According to Gardener, Miantonomo claimed that:

… so are we all Indians as the English are, and say brother to one another; so must we be one as they are, otherwise we shall be all gone shortly, for you know our fathers had plenty of deer and skins, our plains were full of deer, as also our woods, and of turkies, and our coves full of fish and fowl. But these English having gotten our land, they with scythes cut down the grass, and with axes fell the trees; their cows and horses eat the grass, and their hogs spoil our clam banks, and we shall all be starved; therefore it is best for you to do as we, for we are all the Sachems from east to west, both Moquakues and Mohauks joing with us, and we are all resolved to fall upon them all, at one appointed day; and therefore I am
come to you privately first, because you can persuade the Indians and Sachem to what you will, and I will send over fifty Indians to Block-Island, and thirty to you from thence, and take an hundred of Southampton Indians with an hundred of your own here; and when you see the three fires that will be made forty days hence, in a clear night, then do as we, and the next day fall on and kill men, women, and children, but no cows, for they will serve to eat till our deer be increased again. (Gardner 54-55)

Miantonomo’s attempt was a failure. Not a long time before, the Pequots tried to gain his support and he had rejected them. Now, the same happened to him. Without sufficient response from other tribes, he decided to attack the Mohegans instead. Unfortunately for Miantonomo, he was captured during the attack. Uncas asked the Commissioners of the United Colonies to decide what to do with the Narragansett sachem. They decided that Miantonomo should be executed by the Mohegans because “Uncas could not be safe whilst Miantonomo lived”, and advised Uncas that “in the manner of his [Miantonomo’s] death all mercy and moderation should be showed, contrary to the practice of the Indians, who exercise tortures and cruelty” (Bradford 368).

Consequently, Uncas’s brother killed the sachem from behind with a blow of his hatchet. That way, the English managed to get rid of another powerful leader and alleged conspirator who dared to challenge their dominant position in the region. Other Narragansett sachems were angry but did not feel strong enough to be engaged in a conflict with the United Colonies. Under duress they signed all peace treaties forced on them. Nevertheless, the tension and mutual mistrust continued (Vaughan, New England Frontier 165).

Meanwhile, the situation was becoming tense in the Plymouth Colony too. Growing hunger for land was in the core of all problems. Additionally, the “old comers” were to be replaced by the younger generation. Edward Winslow moved to England and his son, Josiah Winslow, became the new military leader of the Plymouth Colony replacing Miles Standish who died in 1656. William Bradford himself was becoming increasingly pessimistic about the future of the Plymouth Colony. The newcomers did not always adhere to the original idea of creating “the city upon the hill”. Rather than that, they often did everything possible to enrich themselves. Bradford died in May 1657, fearing that “if New England continued its ‘degenerate’ ways, God would surely wreak his vengeance”
Increase Mather also expected a conflict with the local natives, understanding it as a God’s punishment. According to Mather, New England had succumbed to sin and uncleanness:

And whereas they [the Indians] have been quiet until the last year, that must be ascribed to the wonderfull Providence of God, who did (as with Jacob of old, and after that with the Children of Israel) lay the fear of the English, and the dread of them upon all the Indians. The terror of God was upon them round about. Nor indeed had they such advantages in former years as now they have, in respect of Arms and Ammunition, their bows and arrows not being comparably such weapons of death and destruction, as our guns and swords are, with which they have been unhappily furnished. Nor were our sins ripe for so dreadfull a judgment, untill the Body of the first Generation was removed, and another Generation risen up which hath not so pursued, as ought to have been, the blessed design of their Fathers, in following the Lord into this Wilderness, whilst it was a land not sown. (7-8)

In a similar way, the Wampanoags were on the cusp of their own generation change. Massasoit died in 1660’s, to be replaced by his eldest son Wamsutta, also known as the Alexander of Pokanoket. Following other rumors of Indian conspiracy, Alexander was forced to go to Plymouth to be interrogated there on the matter, after Josiah Winslow had threatened him by holding his pistol to the sachems chest. No wonder that Alexander was infuriated and humiliated by such behavior. To make the matters even worse, Alexander fell ill soon after the conference. He was taken back to his seat at Mount Hope but died a few days later. The Wampanoags were convinced that the English were responsible for his death. Alexander’s younger brother Metacom, better known as King Philip, became the new leader of the Wampanoags in 1662. Ironically, Philip and Josiah Winslow, whose fathers had developed a personal bound close to friendship, were to become arch enemies in the near future (Jennings 289; Philbrick 203-204).

Philip was aware of the fact that the world of his fathers had been disappearing and that he had two choices- total submission or war. Both possibilities could have disastrous consequences both for him and his people. It is not sure when he decided for the second option. What is sure, however, is that the behavior of the Plymouth authorities increased the tension and their harsh and arrogant attitude towards the Wampanoags escalated the situation. Based upon rumors or indirect evidence, Philip was often accused of plotting
against the English. When being questioned about the matter, Philip always denied conspiring. In 1671, after yet another war scare, Philip and other prominent Wampanoags had to go to Taunton to sign a peace treaty (Leach 24, 27).

The circumstances under which the treaty was signed must have been humiliating for Philip and his people. They were made to surrender their guns and agree to become subjects to Plymouth. Moreover, Philip had to agree that he could sell his remaining land only with the direct permission of Plymouth authorities and had to pay a large fine. Philip tried to exploit the rivalry between the colonies and complained in Boston about the unjust treatment. Although he was partly successful, this attempt was foiled by another meeting with Philip in Plymouth in September 1671. This time, Philip was interrogated in front of commissioners from Plymouth, Connecticut and Massachusetts, so that the responsibility for any decision made would be shared by all the colonies. According to Leach, “the meeting was conducted almost as though it were a criminal trial, with Philip at the bar of justice” and not surprisingly, Philip was found guilty of plotting against the English and was made to sign another treaty which was “almost complete surrender” (28).

It is quite likely that by that time Philip did try to secure the support of other tribes of the region for a possible uprising. Moreover, feeling that he had no option but war, Philip decided to sell most of his land apart from area surrounding Mount Hope. The money earned was used for buying weapons and ammunition. In their hunger for land and profit, the English were blind to see the possible danger and in 1674 they annulled the ban on selling powder and shot to the local natives (Philbrick 220).

Even though Philip was preparing for war, he did everything possible to avoid an open conflict until he would be ready. His proud young warriors were eager to fight and it was becoming more and more difficult for Philip to hold them back. Nevertheless, in January 1675 the matters moved on faster than he had expected. John Sassamon, a Praying Indian and Eliot’s assistant who used to be close to Philip and some time even worked as his translator, visited Josiah Winslow and warned him that Philips was about to attack the English. Soon after the meeting, Sassamon was found dead under pond ice. It is not clear how he died. It is likely that he was killed because he was seen as a traitor by many “pagan” Indians. Whatever was the case, the English were afraid that Sassamon’s warnings might have been true and started to investigate his death. Soon they found an Indian
eyewitness, who claimed that Sassamon had been killed by three Wampanoag Indians. One of them called Tobias was Philip’s senior counselor. The three Indians were later arrested, put on trial, found guilty and hanged, although the Indians insisted on their innocence. For Wampanoags, this was the last straw (Jennings 296-297; Philbrick 221).

John Easton, the deputy governor of Rhode Island in 1675, later wrote an account, providing an interesting inside into the situation before the war. To some extent, his account reveals the Native perspective and shows that Philip was willing to keep peace if treated better by the Puritan authorities. Easton was a Quaker and his views were therefore more critical of the Puritans than those of Increase Mather, who wrote with Puritan bias. Easton described the negotiation of Rhode Island magistrates with Philip in which both sides tried to prevent the war:

We sat very friendly together. We told him our business was to endeavor that they might not receive or do wrong. They said that was well—they had done no wrong, the English wronged them. We said we knew—the English said the Indians wronged them and the Indians said the English wronged them, but our desire was the quarrel might rightly be decided in the best way, and not as dogs decided their quarrels. The Indians owned that fighting was the worst way; then they propounded how right might take place, we said by arbitration. They said all English agreed against them, and so by arbitration they had had much wrong, many miles square of land so taken from them; for English would have English arbitrators, and once they were persuaded to give in their arms, that thereby jealousy might be removed, and the English having their arms would not deliver them as they had promised, until they consented to pay a 100 pounds, and now they had not so much land or money, that they were as good to be killed as to leave all their livelihood. (4)

Philip went on with his complaints about the English behavior and mentioned how his father Massasoit had helped the first English settlers:

They [the Wampanoags] said they had been the first in doing good to the English, and the English the first in doing wrong; they said when the English first came, their king’s father was as a great man and the English as a little child. He constrained other Indians from wronging the English and gave them corn and showed them how to plant and was free to do them any good and had let them have a 100 times more land than now the king had for his own people. But their king’s brother, when he was king, came miserably to die by being

69
forced into court and, as they judged, poisoned. And another grievance was if 20 of their honest Indians testified that a Englishman had done them wrong, it was as nothing; and if but one of their worst Indians testified against any Indian or their king when it pleased the English, that was sufficient. Another grievance was when their kings sold land the English would say it was more than they agreed to and a writing must be proof against all them, and some of their kings had done wrong to sell so much that he left his people none, and some being given to drunkenness, the English made them drunk and then cheated them in bargains, but now their kings were forewarned not to part with land for nothing in comparison to the value thereof. Now whomever the English had once owned for king or queen, they would later disinherit, and make another king that would give or sell them their land, that now they had no hopes left to keep any land. (Easton 5-6)

Unfortunately, the Puritan authorities were not willing to cooperate with Rhode Island “heretics” and continued in their own policy, which consequently led to the war.

5.2. The Beginning of the War

Following the trial in the summer of 1675, Wampanoag Indians started to attack English settlements at Swansea on the edge of the Plymouth Colony. After a series of burning raids and looting, the inhabitants of Swansea lived in constant fear, often abandoned their homes and concentrated at fortified garrisons, desperately waiting for help. The Plymouth Colony asked Boston to send some troops, hoping to crush the uprising at its very beginning, when the Wampanoags were trapped on the Mount Hope peninsula. Meanwhile, the English tried to do everything possible to secure peace with other tribes, especially with the Narragansetts and the Nipmucks, who were allegedly ready to support Philip. Although they managed to obtain promises of peace and loyalty, the English remained highly suspicious of these tribes (Leach 37-38).

It is uncertain who first spilled blood. Wampanoag powwows allegedly told Philip that the war could be successful only if it would be the English who kills first. On June 23, some Swansea settler tried to save their houses from ransacking. One settler shot his musket, wounding an Indian. Allegedly, the Indian later died. Therefore, the impatient
Wampanoag warriors got what they had been waiting for. Now they could start the war. Before long, the first English were killed (Philbrick 229, 237).

June 24 was designated as a day of humiliation and prayers throughout the colony. The settlers hoped to turn away God’s wrath. Unfortunately, in the end it was more a day of mourning for the colony, as many people were killed in Swansea on that day. Mather later described the events of the day: “Thus did the War begin, this being the first English blood which was spilt by the Indians in an hostile way. The Providence of God is deeply to be observed, that the sword should be first drawn upon a day of Humiliation, the Lord thereby declaring from heaven that he expects something else from his People besides fasting and prayer” (9).

When the Massachusetts troops finally arrived at Swansea on June 28, they joined forces with the Plymouth soldiers and decided to attack Philip at his seat in Mount Hope. On June 30, about four hundred soldiers accompanied by some friendly Indians set off. However, when they reached the Mount Hope peninsula, all they managed to find were some heads of Swansea settlers impaled on poles and a handful of enemy Indians who were immediately killed. It was obvious that the main body of Wampanoags managed to escape to the neighboring Pocasset territory on the east. By then, the Pocasset Indians, who had strong bounds with the Wampanoags, had remained neutral. But now, it seemed that they had joined Philip (Leach 54-55).

Meanwhile, Indians warriors continued in spreading terror among the English settlers, killing even more people in the Swansea region. Mather described the atrocities in detail, claiming that the Indians “barbarously murthered both men and women in those places, stripping the slain whether men or women, and leaving them in the open field as naked as in the day wherein they were born. Such also is their inhumanity as that they flay of the skin from their faces and heads of those they get into their hands, and go away with the hairy Scalp of their enemyes” (10).

After some hesitation, the English decided to move forward to the Pocasset country to pursue Philip and his warriors. Very soon, it became apparent that the tactics used by the English leaders was not effective enough for fighting the Indians. The English wanted to engage their enemy in an open battle, but to no avail. Inexperienced in forest warfare, the soldiers were not able to get at their enemy, who were hiding in the woods and swamps,
laying ambushes and then quickly retreating. Therefore, when they attacked the Indians at Pocasset, Philip’s people managed to escape into an extensive swamp. Using the natural cover, the Indians could ambush and kill the advancing soldiers. The English stopped the attack and decided to besiege the swamp instead, hoping that the Indians would surrender soon because of hunger. Unfortunately for the English, a series of strategic mistakes caused that the siege proved to be a failure and Philip and his followers escaped, heading north to Massachusetts. The attempt to stop Philip before he could join in with other tribes was unsuccessful (Leach 68-72, 93).

By August 1675, the violence spread into both the Connecticut and Massachusetts Colony. The Nipmucks, a loose confederation of Indians settled in the Springfield area, sided with Philip and attacked a number of frontier towns, causing a huge damage on property and killing or kidnapping many settlers. Surprisingly, some of the Nipmuck who joined Philip were former converts from Eliot’s praying towns. Jennings, who had been highly critical of Eliot’s efforts to convert Indians to Christianity, wrote that “if more proof is needed that Eliot’s proselytizing had been forcible and resented, the rising of the Nipmuck ´converts` should be evidence enough” (Jennings 309).

5.3. The Great Swamp Fight

Since the beginning of the conflict, the English were concerned about the intentions of the Narragansett tribe. They feared that if the Narragansetts joined the Wampanoags and the Nipmucks, the consequences might be catastrophic for the English. Although far from united in their opinion on the conflict, the Narragansett sachems tried to stay neutral, even though some of them provided a shelter for some Wampanoags refuges. The English, on the other hand, were highly suspicious of their actions and were making plans for subjugating the powerful and therefore potentially dangerous tribe. The Narragansetts signed under much duress two different treaties with the English, promising to stay loyal and to surrender all enemy Indians they had been sheltering. The second condition, however, was not fully meet. The most eager to prove his loyalty was Ninigret, the sachem
of the Eastern Niantics who were a Narragansett sub-tribe but now decided to side with the English. He sent a severed head of a Wampanoag to New London. Some other heads were turned over to the English later. However, the main body of Indian refuges was not surrendered to the English authorities (Leach 112-113).

The Narragansett hesitation to surrender the refuges infuriated the authorities of the United Colonies. The English were also suspecting that Narragansett warriors secretly participated in attacks on English settlements in Massachusetts. Increase Mather believed that the Narragansetts were simply playing for time and waited for spring to start a campaign against the English. He wrote that “some (at least two Indians) from amongst themselves, came to the English, and told them that the Narragansets were resolved (if they could) to destroy the English: but they were loth to begin to fall upon them before winter, but in the Spring when they should have the leaves of trees and Swamps to befriend them, they would doe it: wherefore it was judged necessary to send out Forces against them, and preparations were made accordingly” (Mather 20).

In December, about thousand soldiers from the United Colonies joined by some 150 Pequot and Mohegan Indians marched to Rhode Island to “execute the vengeance of the Lord upon the perfidious and bloody Heathen” (Mather 20). Although Rhode Island wished to stay neutral in the conflict and did not provide any soldiers, it was agreed that the troops could enter its territory. Realizing that they were in a great danger, the Narragansetts concentrated in their newly built fort near the present Kingston in Rhode Island. The marching English troops under the command of Josiah Winslow managed to destroy some Indian villages and capture some Narragansett people on the way. One of these Indians called Peter after “having received some disgust among his Country-men” betrayed his tribe and agreed to cooperate with the English and guide their forces (Mather 20). Peter showed the English the way to the Narragansett stronghold, leading them through frozen swamps. There they found a fort with about one thousand of Indians inside (Leach 125, 129).

Unfortunately for the Indians, the construction of the fort was not completed and there was a gap at one corner of the palisade that was only temporarily blocked, which allowed the English soldiers to enter it. As the fort was equipped with numerous flankers, many English soldiers including a number of important captains were killed by the
defending Indians when they tried to get inside the fortification. To make the matters worse, some soldiers were accidentally killed by their own comrades who were behind them. After some time, however, the English troops managed to get inside the fort and the Narragansett warriors started to flee into the swamp, from where they continued to attack the English soldiers, trying to save the Native women and children who were trapped in wigwams inside the fort (Philbrick 272-273).

Consequently, General Winslow ordered to set the whole structure on fire and burn the Indians remaining inside the fort. There were some objections to the plan but these were made not to spare the lives of Indian women and children but simply to use the fort as a shelter for the English troops suffering from cold and lack of supplies. Moreover, the Narragansetts had filled the fort with their provisions and grain that could be used by the English soldiers. Deaf to these pleads, Winslow ordered to proceed with the original plan and the fort was burnt down. Increase Mather later described the course of the battle:

> The next day, although it were the Sabbath, yet, provisions being almost spent by our Souldiers, waiting so long for Connecticut Forces, the Councill of War resolved to give Battle to the enemy. The English Souldiers played the men wonderfully; the Indians also fought stoutly, but were at last beat out of their Fort, which was taken by the English, There were hundreds of Wigwams (or Indian houses) within the Fort, which our Souldiers set on fire, in the which men, women and Children (no man knoweth how many hundreds of them) were burnt to death. (20)

Philbrick later added that: “Thirty-eight years before, Narragansett warriors had been sickened by the burning of the Pequot fort at Mystic, Connecticut. On this day, December 19, 1675, Pequot warriors were there to watch the Narragansetts meet a similar fate” (277).

It is not certain, how many Narragansett Indians died on that day. The estimates are from 200 to 600 natives, most of them being innocent noncombatants burnt in their wigwams. Those who escaped went to Nipmuck territory, where they joined the Nipmuck and the Wampanoags in their fight against the English. It must have been a terrible blow for one of the most powerful tribes in Southern New England. Moreover, their food stored for the winter had burned with the fort and hunger and diseases further ravaged the surviving Narragansetts. The English also suffered heavy losses. About eighty soldiers
were dead, many of them succumbing to their wounds during the retreat to their base in Wickford. Among the casualties were some prominent military leaders. This “preventive” massacre, however, did not bring the peace into New England and atrocities continued. The Narragansetts lost their territory and provisions and had no choice but to fight the English. (Leach 132-133; Philbrick 277-278).

5.4. Philip’s Death

Although the fighting Indians kept attacking the English settlements and were generally successful in attacking and ambushing the English forces, the situation was gradually getting worse for them. Many settlers had to abandon the frontier towns and moved to bigger towns for protection. Indians also attacked the until then neutral Rhode Island, forcing Rhode Island inhabitants seek refuge on near Aquidneck Island. The angry Narragansetts even burned down Roger William’s house in Providence (Leach 168).

Meanwhile, Philip tried to find new allies among New York tribes and even led some negotiations with French hoping to gain their support. All he got, however, were promises and some ammunition. The biggest concern for both English and Indians was to secure some food. Because of the war, the fields were abandoned and famine was a real danger, especially for the roaming Indians. The English knew that there were attempts on the side of the Indians to go back to their home territories to search for food in hidden caches. Expeditions made of some English volunteers and Indian auxiliaries tried to chase the wandering enemy. One of these expeditions was particularly successful, when they accidentally came across a group of Narragansett warriors and attacked them. One of the attacked and later captured Indians was Canonchet, the most important young warior-sachem of the Narragansetts. As fate would have it, Canonchet was caught and killed by other Indians (Leach 171-173).

Mather’s account of the Canonchet execution reveals that the English made sure that all their Indian allies participated in it. It clearly shows how the English deliberately tried to drive a wedge between their Native allies and other Indians:
This week we hear from Connecticut, that a party of their Souldiers went with many of the Pequods, and Monhegins, and some of Ninnegrets Indians, to seek after the enemy, and they killed and took captive forty and four Indians without the loss of any of ours: amongst whom were several of their Chief Captains, and their great Sachem called Cuanonchet, who was a principal Ring-leader in the Narraganset War, and had as great an interest and influence, as can be said of any among the Indians. This great Sachem was pursued into a River by one of Ninnegret his men, and there taken. Being apprehended he was carried away to Stonington, where the English caused the Pequods and Monhegins, and Ninnegrets Indians, to join together in shooting Cuanonchet, and cutting off his head, which was sent to Hartford. And herein the English dealt wisely, for by this means, those three Indian Nations are become abominable to the other Indians, and it is now their interest to be faithful to the English, since their own Country-men will never forgive them, on account their taking and killing the Sachem mentioned: So that there was a gracious smile of providence in this thing, yet not without matter of humbling to us, in that the Sachem was apprehended not by English but by Indian hands. (Mather 25)

By the end of spring 1676, many Indian bands suffering from hunger and diseases surrendered to the English or their Native allies. On the other hand, the English were increasingly successful in surprising and killing many Indians who tried to provide for themselves by fishing and were therefore concentrated in fishing camps. In one such attack, as many as two hundred rebel Indians were killed by Massachusetts militia. The unity of Indians began to crumble and they became more and more divided in their opinions on the further actions. Some of them wanted to carry on fighting, others believed in peace negotiations with the English. The English encouraged them to surrender, promising to give amnesty to those who had not participated directly in any attacks against the English. For those enemy Indians who took part in any attack on the English, the only options suggested by the Puritan authorities were either death or slavery (Leach 199, 203, 213-214).

Another blow for the Philip’s followers came when the Mohawks, encouraged by New York governor Andros, started to attack the weakened Native rebels, eager to destroy their traditional enemies and gain some plunder. It was the decisive moment of the war. Since then, Philip and other fighting Indians were attacked everywhere they moved. Philip and his remaining people were forced to return to the Mount Hope peninsula where they were determined to fight until the end (Jennings 315-316).
As usual, Mather described all the events as God’s providence:

A day of Humiliation by Fasting and Prayer, was attended in the Town-house at Boston, by the Magistrates, and Deputies of the General Court, with Assistance of so many Teaching Elders as could be obtained. Although many such solemn occasions have at times been attended in former years, yet it hath been observed by some, that God did always signally own his Servants, upon their being before him in such a way and manner: And so it was now; for the very next day after this, a Letter came from Connecticut to Boston, informing, that God had let loose the Mohawks upon our Enemies, and that they were sick of Fluxes, and Fevers, which proved mortal to multitudes of them. (26)

With the help from the Mohawks and other Indian allies, the English forces were managing to chase and kill a large number of Indians who kept on fighting. More mass surrenders followed as well. An interesting case occurred in July 1676, when one lesser Nipmuck sachem called Sagamore John captured Matoonas, the much-wanted leader of the Nipmucks resistance responsible for some attacks on the English settlements, and handed him over to the Boston authorities. Betraying his previous comrade, Sagamore John and his people later even executed Matoonas tied to a tree. Mather saw it as a good omen and had no doubts that Philip would meet the same fate:

Sagamore John was desirous that he and his men might be the Executioners; wherefore Matoonas was carried out into the Common at Boston, and there being tied to a Tree, the Sachim who had now submitted himself, with several of his men, shot him to death. Thus did the Lord (a year after) retaliate upon him the innocent blood which he had shed, as he had done so God hath requited him: And inasmuch as Matoonas who began the War and Mischiefs which have followed thereon, in this Colony of Massachusets is taken, and Justice glorified upon him, it seems to be a good Omen, that ere long Philip who began the War in the other Colony, shall likewise be delivered up unto Justice. In due time his foot shall slide, and the things which shall come upon him seem to make haste. (36-37)

This time Mather was right. On August 1, 1676, a party of English soldiers and Indian auxiliaries under the command of famous Indian fighter Benjamin Church, almost caught Philip near Bridgewater in the Plymouth Colony. Philip made a narrow escape but other Wampanoags including his wife and nine-year-old son were captured by the Church’s
party. In Mather’s words: “God brought that grand Enemy into great misery before he quite destroy him. It must needs be bitter as death to him, to loose his Wife and only Son (for the Indians are marvellous fond and affectionate towards their Children) besides other Relations, and almost all his Subjects and Country too” (37).

Church was eager to become a public hero and get the biggest trophy – Philip’s head. He could rely on the assistance of a Wampanoag Indian who wanted to revenge his brother, allegedly killed by Philip when proposing that the Wampanoags should surrender. The Indian led Church and his people into the swamp where Philip was hiding. Philip’s last stand occurred on August 12, 1676. After being attacked by Church’s men, Philip tried to make another escape. But this time he failed. He was shot death by John Aldemaran, one of the Indian auxiliaries who was helping Church. Philip was beheaded and his body was divided into four pieces by another Indian from the Church’s party. Philip’s head was brought to Plymouth where it was displayed for next twenty years (Philbrick 336-338).

Although fighting continued and there were some raids on English settlements even in 1677, Phillip’s death meant the end of the war. Mather later concluded that:

...in that very place where he first contrived and began his mischief, was he taken and destroyed, and there was he (like as Agag was hewed in pieces before the Lord) cut into four quarters, and is now hanged up as a monument of revenging Justice, his head being cut off and carried away to Plymouth, his Hands were brought to Boston. So let all thine Enemies perish, O Lord! When Philip was thus slain, five of his men were killed with him, one of which was his chief Captains son, being (as the Indians testifie) that very Indian, who shot the first gun at the English, when the War began. So that we may hope that the War in those parts will dye with Philip. A little before this, the Authority in that Colony had appointed the seventeenth of this instant to be observed as a day of publick Thanksgiving throughout that Jurisdiction, on the account of wonderful success against the Enemy, which the Lord hath blessed them with, ever since they renewed their Covenant with him; and that so they might have hearts raised and enlarged in ascribing praises to God, he delivered Philip into their hands a few dayes before their intended Thanksgiving. Thus did God break the head of that Leviathan, and gave it to be meat to the people inhabiting the wilderness, and brought it to the Town of Plimouth the very day of their solemn Festival...(39)

The conflict bearing the name of the Wampanoag leader was not a well-organized pan-Indian uprising. There was not only one leader in command. In fact, Philip himself was
not reported to directly participate in any major attack on the English settlements. Rather than that, it was a desperate attempt of various tribes and groups to maintain their lifestyle and culture that was threatened by aggressive Puritan policy. There were numerous reasons for the final defeat of the fighting Native Americans. The lack of supplies, diseases and certainly the inability to unite effectively were among the most important reasons. By contrast, despite frequent intercolonial squabbling, the English were able to unite to some extent, especially during the campaign against the Narragansett. Even more importantly, the English used the rivalry among the tribes for their own benefit, successfully playing one Indian group off against another (Leach 241-243).

5.5. The Aftermath of the War

The consequences of the war were far-reaching for the both sides of the conflict. It has been often mentioned, that proportionally, King Philips War was the bloodiest conflict in American history. Although the exact numbers are unknown, somewhere between eight or ten percent of English soldiers died and the casualties on the Indian side were even greater. It is estimated that as much as 2,000 or 3,000 thousand Native American were killed during the conflict and many more succumbed to diseases and famine (Jennings 324; Philbrick 332; Vaughan, New England Frontier 320).

When Mather was describing the outcome of the war he wrote that:

And we have reason to conclude that Salvation is begun, and in a gracious measure carried on towards us. For since last March there are two or 3000. Indians who have been either killed, or taken, or submitted themselves to the English. And those Indians which have been taken Captive; & others also, inform that the Narragansets are in a manner ruined, there being (as they say) not above an hundred men left of them, who the last year were the greatest body of Indians in New-England, and the most formidable Enemy which hath appeared against us. But God hath consumed them by the Sword, & by Famine and by Sickness... (40-41)
Not only had the war a huge economic impact and destroyed many settlements and towns which stayed abandoned, but it also profoundly changed the course of the relations between the white settlers and the Native Americans. Even during the war, the colonists in Massachusetts started to be suspicious of all Indians, including those concentrated in praying towns or helping them in combat. Enemy Native Americans were often seen as “tools of Satan, temporarily unleashed by God to punish His erring children, but nonetheless legitimate objects far all the hatred and destruction which the English could bring to bear upon them” (Leach 194).

Christian Indians, who often served as scouts for the English troops, were not always trusted, and their comrades staying in Massachusetts praying towns were often humiliated or harshly treated. In August 1675, the number of praying towns was reduced to five. Later, as the hatred towards the Native Americans was growing, the General Court ordered all praying Indians to be moved to Deer Island, a barren and cold island in the Boston Harbour. Confined to a small space, exposed to cold weather, as many as five hundred Indians, mostly women and children, suffered there without food and proper shelter until 1677 (Vaughan, *New England Frontier* 318).

About a thousand of Native Americans, including Philip’s nine-year-old son, were sold as slaves to Bermuda during and after the conflict. Others became servants and cheap labour for English farmers or were forced to live under constant supervision, concentrated in four remaining praying towns. In reality, it was an early form of reservation system. Those Indians who managed to escape, often fled to Canada, later fighting for the French against the English colonies (Jennings 325; Philbrick 345).

In spite of all the attempts to gain as much freedom as possible for their own people by cooperating with the English, even the Indian allies like Uncas or Ninigret gradually started to be only vassals of the English authorities, following the English laws and orders. Uncas later gave all his remaining land to be used by English farmers and his people became English subjects in their own land (Leach 245; Nash 120).

Vaughan argues that the defeat of the Native Americans was inevitable and that the war “was less a clash of cultural opposites than the inexorable expansion of one system at the expense- and sometimes at the invitation- of the other” (323). For Vaughan, it is clear
that the superior system was the English one. For the Native Americans there was only one possibility to survive and it was to embrace the English way of life and to accept English rules. According to Vaughan, this was not at all a bad option. He explains that: “there is no reason to expect the member of a primitive society to forego the alluring offerings of a wealthier and more cosmopolitan civilization….While there is a fascination in studying primitive cultures, there is no reason to expect the participants in those cultures to remain stagnant in the face of better alternatives” (Vaughan 325). Moreover, he argues that some Native Americans were eager to become a part of the “better” English system. He claims that “there is some evidence [what evidence he means is not mentioned] that a far greater number of them would throw off the shackles of the Stone Age if their sachems had not been so reluctant to jeopardize their own power and wealth (Vaughan, New England Frontier 326).

It is questionable, however, whether the alternatives offered by the English system really brought something better for the Native Americans. All evidence seems to show the opposite. Indeed, Vaughan’s opponent Francis Jennings calls the war “the Second Puritan Conquest” leading the Native Americans only “deeper into subjection and debauchery” (325). It is interesting to read a summary of the conflict given by Edmund Andros to the Lords of Trade after the end of the war. Andros said that “the advantages thereby were none, the disadvantages very great and like to be more, even in the loss of said Indians” (Andros qtd. in Jennings 325).
Conclusion

King Philip’s War was the last link in the chain of events that led to the demise of Algonquin tribes in what is now called Southern New England. It meant the loss of Indian sovereignty and broke all Native resistance throughout the region. The tribes never recovered from this last blow and those who did not flee became mere subjects of the English in their own homeland.

One by one, once mighty and populous nations were gradually destroyed by repeated waves of diseases and conflicts with the English newcomers. First the Pequots, followed by the Narragansetts and finally the Wampanoags were crushed by the English forces supported by Indian auxiliaries. (It is noteworthy that all important leaders of Native resistance were killed by other Native Americans. The Pequot sachem Sassacus, Narragansett chief Miantonomo and also Philip, the leader of the Wampanoag uprising, all died by the hand of another Indian.) Without the help of their Indian allies, the English might not have achieved such military supremacy in New England.

Other Indian tribes beyond the boundaries of New England started to play the most important role in Anglo-Indian relations. The Iroquois Confederacy, a well-organized body of five (and later six) Iroquois Nations, became the major Native force. Supported by the English, the Iroquois stared to control weaker tribes, often absorbing the members of those groups who were defeated by them, including some refuges from New England tribes. The Iroquois, however, were out of control of New England’s Puritan authorities. They cooperated with more pragmatic English leaders like for example with Edmund Andros, who saw the Iroquois as a useful tool for English expansion and as a buffer against the French and their Indian allies. Once this need disappeared, however, even the powerful League of Iroquois disintegrated and was later scattered by American forces during the American Revolution.

The conflicts with the Algonquin Indians brought neither peace nor prosperity to New England. Other skirmishes with the Indian tribes living north of New England soon followed. Many of those natives who had experienced the harsh English treatment left the New England territory and were driven into the arms the French, whose approach to the Native Americans was less aggressive. Later, they often fought against the English during
the French and Indian War. New England economy remained badly shaken by the
tremendous cost of the war. In 1686, New England colonies even lost the control over their
territory for some time, when they had became a part of the Dominion of New England
ruled by a royal governor.

New England of the 17th century was a microcosm of the future white-Indian
relations on much larger scale. It was an important turning point for both cultures and it had
changed the way in which the both sides saw each other. The attitude towards the Native
Americans became more hostile during and after the King Philip’s War. English leaders
and settlers saw Indians as a potential threat and an annoying obstacle to European
expansion in North America.

On the other hand, following their experience from the Pequot and King Philip’s
War, the English were always ready to use Indians as their allies when it served their
purposes. As in New England, the intertribal rivalry was often used in dealing with
potential enemies. Additionally, the pattern of getting Native Americans under the control
of white authorities by keeping them in restricted areas or reservations can be also traced
back to 17th century New England.

The Puritan policy of subduing the Native Americans was to be repeated in the
future. If any kind of opposition was met, violence or forcible removal followed. Apart
from the romantic concept of “Noble Savage”, embraced mostly by those who were not in a
direct or everyday contact with the Native Americans, English settlers and colonists kept
seeing Indians as barbarous and inferior people and their treatment of the American Indian
reflected the opinion. Gradually, the European technological superiority accompanied by an
assumed cultural superiority led to racial prejudice. The colour of skin started to be an
important issue.

The events which took place in New England during the 17th century significantly
influenced the further course of American history. Sadly, the consequences were tragic for
the Native Americans. It is not easy to understand people who lived four hundred years ago
in completely different circumstances and in a different social and cultural environment.
Nor is it easy and correct to judge their actions from today’s perspective. Nevertheless, this
interesting period of initial contacts between two different civilizations definitely deserves
attention.
Works cited:

<http://www.jstor.org/stable/1922594>


*DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska*. Web. 20. Sept. 2010.  
<http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/libraryscience/33/>


DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska. Web. 10. July 2010.  
<http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/etas/42/>

<http://www.accessgenealogy.com/native/tribes/massachusetts/massachusethist.htm>

<http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/libraryscience/31/>


<http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1003&context=etas>

<http://www.papalencyclicals.net/Paul03/p3subli.htm>


Underhill, John. *Newes from America; Or, A New and Experimentall Discoverie of New England; Containing, A Trve Relation of Their War-like Proceedings These Two Yeares Last Past, with a Figure of the Indian Fort, or Palizado.* Originally published in London 1638. *DigitalCommons@University of Nebraska.* Web. 19. Aug. 2010. 
<http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/etas/37/>

<http://www.jstor.org/stable/1857900>


<http://www.accessgenealogy.com/native/tribes/wampanoag/wampanoaghist.htm>
<http://ia311237.us.archive.org/1/items/keyintolanguageo01will/keyintolanguageo01will.pdf>


<http://www.mayflowerhistory.com/PrimarySources/GoodNews.pdf>


List of Appendices

Appendix 1- Tribes of Southern New England
Appendix 2- New England Colonies in 1650
Appendix 3- William Bradford
Appendix 4- Myles Standish
Appendix 5- Edward Winslow
Appendix 6- Roger Williams
Appendix 7- John Winthrop
Appendix 8- The Seal of Massachusetts Bay Colony
Appendix 9- Pequot War Battle Sites
Appendix 10- Attack on the Pequot Village at Mystic, Connecticut
Appendix 11- King Philip
Appendix 12- Ninigret II
Appendices

App. 1: Tribes of Southern New England

[Map of Tribal Territories Southern New England]

App. 2: New England Colonies in 1650

http://wps.ablongman.com/wps/media/objects/1483/1518969/DIVI036.jpg
App. 3: William Bradford

App. 4: Miles Standish
App. 5: Edward Winslow

http://www.pilgrimhall.org/images/WebEdwardWinslow.jpg

App. 6: Roger Williams

http://www.loeb-tourovisitorscenter.org/images/rogerwilliams400.jpg
App. 7: John Winthrop

http://auden.stanford.edu/cgi-bin/auden/media/winthrop.gif

App. 8: The Seal of Massachusetts Bay Colony

http://www.irwinator.com/126/w33.jpg
App. 9: Pequot War Battle Sites

http://bc.barnard.columbia.edu/~rmccaugh/earlyAC/pequom2.html
App. 10: Attack on the Pequot Village at Mystic, Connecticut

http://bc.barnard.columbia.edu/~rmccaugh/earlyAC/images/pequot.JPG
App. 11: King Philip

http://www.humanities.uci.edu/mclark/HumCore/CoreF2005/WebCoreF05/MetacPor.JPG
App. 12: Ninigret II

http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/d/d4/Ninigret.jpg